

IN LONDON

GONAL O'RIORDAN



BOUGHT FROM



EX LIBRIS

Mulhern Donation

961
069
i

Ev 19

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

IN LONDON

NEW NOVELS

THE LYTTLETON CASE

R. A. V. MORRIS

THE RETURN

WALTER DE LA MARE

FLAPPERS AND PHILOSOPHERS

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

THE PASTURES OF PLENTY

ARCHIBALD LUCK

ADAM'S REST

SARAH GERTRUDE MILLIN

TYRANNY

HOLLOWAY HORN

IN LONDON

THE STORY OF ADAM AND MARRIAGE

by

CONAL O'RIORDAN

THE
STORY
OF
ADAM
AND
MARRIAGE

“Let him be clapt on the shoulder and called Adam.”



LONDON : 48 PALL MALL
W. COLLINS SONS & CO. LTD.
GLASGOW MELBOURNE AUCKLAND

Mulhern Donation

Copyright 1922

Manufactured in Great Britain

TO
J. D. BERESFORD
WHO WELCOMED ADAM TO LONDON

765971



Contents

CHAP.	PAGE
I. ADAM ARRIVES IN LONDON	I
II. ADAM FINDS ANCHORAGE	10
III. ADAM WRITES TO MR. MACARTHY	18
IV. "MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING"	25
V. THE PORTAL OF FAME	33
VI. MORE ADO ABOUT LESS	41
VII. MR. MACARTHY COMES TO TOWN	49
VIII. WITH MR. MACARTHY IN LONDON	58
IX. OF A POST CARD FROM "G. B. S."	66
X. ADAM STOOPS TO CONQUER	74
XI. ADAM GOES ON TOUR	85
XII. SUCCESS	93
XIII. JANE NIGHTINGALE	102
XIV. DUBLIN DOES IT	111
XV. MR. SACKVILLE BEHAVES AS A GENTLE- MAN	122
XVI. LADY DERRYDOWN AT HOME	129
XVII. HOW THE MARCHESA ESCAPED	136
XVIII. MORE COMPANY FOR SIR DAVID	143
XIX. ADAM PROSPERS	150
XX. IN THE SHADOW OF WESTMINSTER CATHEDRAL	158

Contents

CHAP.	PAGE
XXI. THE PROBLEM OF MARRIAGE	166
XXII. THE PROBLEM REMAINS UNSOLVED	174
XXIII. THE SELF-HELP MINISTRY	183
XXIV. TO FIGHT OR NOT TO FIGHT	193
XXV. MAJOR MACFADDEN SMITH	201
XXVI. A BOLT FROM THE BLUE	209
XXVII. IN THE TEMPLE	219
XXVIII. ADAM IS OFFENDED	229
XXIX. AT THE GARAGE	237
XXX. BARBARA	243
XXXI. DEUTSCHLAND UEBER MISS DURWARD	251
XXXII. MR. DUVAL ADVISES	257
XXXIII. ADAM ACCELERATES	264
XXXIV. OUT OF GEAR	271
XXXV. SURRENDER	279
XXXVI. LONDON'S LAST AIR-RAID	286
XXXVII. AND SO THEY WERE MARRIED	296
XXXVIII. AND LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER?	304

Chapter One

ADAM ARRIVES IN LONDON

ON a spring morning in the second decade of the twentieth century, a young man came out of Paddington Station and looked for the first time, with doubtful eyes, upon the world of London. He was a very young man, not quite seventeen, yet in essentials was he a man, and, what in the eyes of a few million people is for some odd reason accounted something more, an Irishman.

If you had asked his name as he came out of the station he would almost certainly have told you, unsuspecting of your good faith and right to question him, that it was Adam Macfadden. But names more glorious, if no more distinctive, might be obtained for half a crown on application for a copy of his baptismal certificate at the Pro-Cathedral or Church of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, in Marlborough Street, Dublin. The names given him in the hope of making him a Chrisom child (such as even in old age was Falstaff) were Adam Byron O'Toole Dudley Wyndham and Innocent. Names, as was observed on that occasion by Mr. Byron O'Toole, his more than godfather, to Mr. Malachy Macfadden, who probably conceived himself to be no less, that sounded nobly in the ear, cost nothing, and looked well on paper.

Adam was thinking of paper and the things that look well on it as he came out of Paddington, for his eye was full of a poster that had obtruded itself upon him at every suburban station through which he had been whisked into the terminus. He wondered

In London

why he found it familiar and what it meant : a dainty lady in pyjamas was pursued by a bluffly eager gentleman in a nightdress across a ribbon of letterpress demanding : " Who Can Stop It ? " If there were words, as he took for granted, at the top of the poster, his eyes had failed to catch them ; but he guessed it to be the bill of a play, and not the sort of play that he would admit had any interest for him. . . . The whole thing was absurd and a little indelicate. . . . Yet he felt an interest in that poster as though that lady and that gentleman were old acquaintances encountered in a foreign land. Amidst the bustle of the arrival platform he seemed to see them running to meet him, crying : " Here we are again ! You have known us all your life." Yet his eye had enough knowledge of posters to tell him that these had not been exposed to the battle and the breeze for more than twenty-four hours. . . . Familiar to him ? How could they be familiar ? As he walked out of Paddington Station he dismissed the thought from his mind, crying aloud : " What rot ! " At his tender age it was impossible for him to foresee that this poster was to haunt his whole future. . . . It seemed to him merely odd that his ejaculation of " What rot " should be, as it were, echoed in huge letters on the flank of some vehicle that roared past him as he emerged from the gloom of the roofed station-yard into the open street.

He looked about him dazedly as motor 'bus after motor 'bus whirled round the corner of Eastbourne Terrace on his right hand side and charged down Praed Street on his left. Motor 'buses were new monsters to him, less tremendous than Mr. Murphy's trams, with which he had been familiar all his life as they groaned round the corners of narrow Dublin streets or thundered Jove-like through the broader thoroughfares of that stately city. Stately indeed did Dublin loom up in the memory of Adam as he

Adam Arrives in London

stood outside Paddington Station, contemplating the mean hurry-scurry of Praed Street. He had understood that Paddington was almost in the heart of the West End of London, at all events nearer to it than any other of the great railway termini, and behold, it stood in a street paltrier to look upon than Westland Row; though, facing south, it had the advantage of more sunlight. He liked the sunlight; for only a few days had passed since he believed for a bad quarter of an hour that he had seen the last of it: fighting for life in the waters of the Liffey he had imagined himself being borne by their tide through the gates of hell or nothingness, but instead they had carried him across St. George's Channel to Bristol, whence the best laid line of railway in the world had sped him on, not clearly knowing why, to London. . . . A clock somewhere struck and whistles blew, it was midday: real midday; for Summer Time, though invented, was not yet enforced.

Adam put his hand to the left breast pocket of his waistcoat, produced a thin wisp of notes that showed traces of their escape from pulping, and counted them, looked at the hotel, shook his head, walked past it once and again: then he crossed the road to the side of the Underground railway station and studied the façade from there. Still undecided, he walked eastwards so far as the street corner, read the name plate, London Street, on a house, instinctively turned down it and found himself gazing at a familiar name: the name of Norfolk Square. . . . What was it that he found so homely about this?

He knew not the eastern counties of England, had no knowledge of England at all a week ago, and now, as has been implied, glimpsed only Bristol fragmentarily and the borders of that most perfect of permanent ways that Brunel had laid for the Great Western Expresses to fly between it and London. . . . Yet the word "Norfolk" conjured

In London

up for him two familiar ideas : as one brought up in the Catholic tradition, albeit in Ireland, he knew the Dukedom of Norfolk to belong to the greatest Catholic family in England, and perhaps, short of royalty, the world, the house of Howard. It was odd that a youth who had learnt the tenets of his creed whilst still a ragamuffin living in a Dublin slum should recognise beneath the title " Norfolk " a sort of spiritual kinsman, however remote, but it was true ; and this is perhaps the most exquisite beauty of all that is beautiful in the Catholic faith. To pass from the sublime to the ridiculous, the word " Norfolk " was familiar because every day of his life for most of the years of that life Adam had been wont to pass and repass a house in Gardiner's Row (which is that street leading from Findlater's Church on the north-eastern corner of Rutland Square, Dublin, in the direction of Mountjoy Square), that bore in golden letters across its Third Georgian front the legend, " Norfolk Hotel." He knew not why, but this façade was impressed on his memory as were but few other houses in Dublin. . . . The two houses in Denmark Street forming the Jesuit School of Belvedere, the house of Mr. Macarthy, his guardian, on the north side of Mountjoy Square, the shabby little house behind St. George's Church with the cosy rooms full of happy memories hidden within, and the house in St. Stephen's Green, sacred to the cultivation of an uncertain half-dozen Muses. And out of Dublin he was familiar with no house.

But Dublin, wherein he had lived virtually the whole of his few years, seemed as remote as a city in dreamland to a sleeper rudely awakened ; this London of which he had not yet traversed five hundred yards was real to him only in its name, which was the reason he had turned down London Street : but Dublin, though paradoxically recalled to him by the word " Norfolk," had ceased to have any reality at all. He could scarce credit that the

Adam Arrives in London

notes he had just looked at, albeit Irish notes, had been handed to him across the counter of the Hibernian Bank in Dame Street, by Mr. Macarthy's old school-friend, the manager in person, just a short week ago. That manager was a hefty, handsome fellow and something of a sailor, but Adam could not think of him as a real man who could cross a real sea as Adam had. . . . To meet Mr. Campbell in Norfolk Square had surprised Adam more than to meet David Copperfield or Arthur Pendennis. For to Adam London was a literary city, and to an imaginative boy as young as Chatterton when he slew himself, or Walter Scott perishing of senility, the literary is more real than the factual. And how could Mr. Campbell be real when even the three young women whom Adam loved best of all had lost reality. First, there was Caroline Brady, the earliest and best known, indeed the old-fashioned would say the only one known at all, was dead: then there was Barbara Burns, the most beautiful, was married: and then there was Josephine O'Meagher, the best beloved, was on that fatal day not yet a week gone by, the day he had flung himself despairingly into the Liffey, become a nun. . . . Adam felt no emotion about any one of them as he gazed at the name-plate of Norfolk Square: he was as one born, already adolescent, into a new world of which he possessed a vague, fantastic, half-remembered plan: a plan designed, corrected, and blottesquely revised by the dozen writers who had made it live for him in their pages, from Fielding and Smollett to George Meredith and Henry James. . . . Even so far as to Joseph Conrad and H. G. Wells. He wanted to see where Mr. Lewisham had lost touch in the mazes of love with his *schemas*, and where a disgusting Secret Agent (all police agents, secret or not, being disgusting) had plied his loathsome trade; but most of all he wanted to walk arm in arm down Piccadilly, from Squire Western's

In London

hostelry at Knightsbridge, with Tom Jones and his Sophia and on with them to Covent Garden to see Hamlet played by David Garrick. For it was the privilege of that great actor, who was perhaps a shabby fellow in reality, to survive as a hero of fiction: to Adam he was as vividly alive as Mr. Partridge or Lord Fellamour or even the immortal, though left for dead, Philosopher Square.

The bells somewhere—perhaps, for the wind was out of north, St. Augustine's, Kilburn—chiming the quarter past noon, found Adam still contemplating Norfolk Square, hazily tracing a third idea concerning it. . . . Was it not in Norfolk Square that his guardian Mr. Macarthy had once lived? He knew it was the Square nearest to Paddington Station, and Mr. Macarthy had spoken of being kept awake by the rumble of the Underground trains and the screaming of their engines, then propelled by steam, and the shrieking of their brakes beneath the house. Adam took a step forward; for all this clearly indicated the north side of Norfolk Square. Of the number he recalled nothing: he chanced nineteen, his favourite number, but it was not that. He saw no "Apartment" cards in any window, and despaired of his search, when a taxi-cab stopped beside him, and a soldier, descending from the seat beside the driver, rang the bell of one of the houses. . . . Adam suddenly remembered that there was a war on.

It was not the sight of a man in uniform that made Adam remember the war; for Dublin was fuller of uniforms than London: but then it always had been so, and the peace fullest of days Adam had seen more soldiers and police, that were war-wolves in sheep-dogs' clothing, in his native city than so far in this London, girding for the third round of that combat in which, for the first time since saltpetre had been diverted from its use as a preservative to a destroying agent, her houses had been knocked

Adam Arrives in London

about her ears. In 1745 that fellow they called the Young Pretender had brought his tribe of lewd Highlanders as far as Derby, but, God be praised, the Duke of Cumberland and his trusty Huns had come to the rescue and sent the murderers packing back north to the glorious and crowning mercy of Culloden. And a trifle over a hundred years before that, the trained bands of London 'prentices had been ordered by their masters to stay at the defile of Brentford the Young Pretender's supposititious great-grandfather's march on London. But in those days you could do your business even so far west as Whitehall without worrying about the biggest artillery duel at Twickenham. And then there were men still living who remembered the battle of Hyde Park Corner, which deflected so many of Thomas Wyatt's army in the direction of Tyburn, that enthusiast having neglected artillery preparation possibly because he had no cannon.

Never from time immemorial (which by law is as long since as Lion-Hearted Richard) was London town treated worse than by saintly Lord George Gordon's religious enthusiasts, who burnt and pillaged it for the honour of Protestantism and broke open Newgate jail in 1780 (where in 1793 his Lordship was privileged to die in the faith which he believed to be the Hebrew), until one summer night in 1915 some members of that same family which had saved London from the Highlanders in 1745, approaching it by the only road they could, which was that highest road of all, the air, dropped some thermite bombs upon the most exclusively Jewish part of Shoreditch, so that some irreproachable children of Abraham suffered a worse fate than the perverse citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah. But by this time London was so great a city that the whole German air-fleet, from the most portentous Zeppelin to the most playful Taube might have sailed across it in line ahead loosing the vials of

In London

their wrath, without quickening the pulses of one in twenty of her parishes.

These facts of London's past and present Adam knew, so far as they are to be known from readable history books and periodicals: the London that lives on printed pages he knew better than any Londoner he was fated to meet, but he was finding it so difficult to make the London of his book-learning square with the London whose pavements he trod upon, that he had no idea where he would look for a bed to sleep in and a board to feed at, when the taxi-cab and soldier man in Norfolk Square reminded him of the war through bringing before his eyes, emerging through the doorway of the house at which the soldier had rung, another figure in khaki whom he recognised. His stars and badges told Adam that he was a captain in the Scots Fusiliers, but Adam remembered him as a clerk in Guinness's brewery whose rendering of the more sentimental tenor songs in Viennese comic opera had made him a popular figure at the Muses Club. His name he could not recall, and Adam's glance in his face wakened no recognition there: his eyes had for Adam the look of a man going to the scaffold. In the doorway stood a portly woman in tears, she was still standing there after the taxi had passed away beyond the church towards Edgware Road and that sector of the western front which the officer's unit filled a gap in. But Adam joyfully sprang up the steps and interposed ere she could close the door: "Excuse me," said he, "but didn't Mr. Macarthy stop here?"

The stout lady, whose hair he noticed now was very white though her complexion had the freshness of a young woman, choked down a sob to answer: "Mr. Macarthy of Dublin is it? Of course he did." She pointed in the direction wherein the taxi had disappeared: "That's his friend, Captain de Frece, just gone. . . . Back to the front, poor dear."

Adam Arrives in London

"I know," said Adam, "that's why I thought you must be Miss . . . Miss . . ." he looked up at her, "Quentin is it?"

The lady shook her head surprisedly. "Not at all," said she, "my name is Durward." Ere Adam could explain (if explain he could) how his bookish mind had said Quentin when he meant Durward, she added, smiling through her tears: "Whatever my name is and whatever is yours, if you're a friend of Mr. Macarthy's, come right in."

Adam, gladly obeying, found himself in the hall of what appeared to him to be a most luxurious lodging-house: Miss Durward claimed for it that it was not the least cosy in Bayswater. And cosiness was not a characteristic of the houses with which Adam was acquainted: Mr. Macarthy had a fine Persian rug or two in his upper part in Mountjoy Square, but the feet did not sink into them as into Miss Durward's puffy Axminsters.

Miss Durward closed the door and said, mopping up her tears: "Isn't this war just dreadful?" She brightened as she added: "You'll be able to tell me, perhaps, how Mr. Macarthy thinks it will end?" Her words told Adam that he was already at home in London.

Chapter Two

ADAM FINDS ANCHORAGE

MISS DURWARD led Adam up a flight of stairs whose silence beneath his tread recalled to him his first visit to a house with a carpeted staircase. He remembered how a lady, as stout as Miss Durward but of less agreeable complexion, had essayed to win him from the Blessed Virgin to Christ by giving him a penny and a hot bath. He blushed to think what Miss Durward would say if he acquainted her with that first great adventure of his in the society to which his grandparents, though neither his father nor his mother, had belonged. He hoped that Miss Durward would be so kind as to let him a room in her house without inquiring into his pedigree. He pinched his thin roll of notes and wondered if it would make a good impression if he dropped them casually on the floor; fingering them reminded him that their unnatural condition might stimulate rather than soothe suspicion. . . . If he were asked to explain why he had tried to drown himself would she be content to know that he had done it for love of a young lady or two? . . . His instinct told him that Miss Durward was romantic, but was she so romantic as all that?

She said as she bowed him in to her "den," as she called it, a room living apparently on over-intimate terms with the bathroom: "And so Mr. Macarthy sent you here? And what does he think about the war?"

Adam addressed himself to answer the latter part

Adam finds Anchorage

of the question. "He thinks it will go on for some time."

"It's been going on for some time already," Miss Durward argued, "when does he think it will end?"

Adam reported Mr. Macarthy as saying that it would not end very soon.

"And what does Mr. Macarthy think about America?" Miss Durward began, but without waiting continued: "And is he married yet?"

Adam, allowing America to go free, said Mr. Macarthy was not married.

To this Miss Durward rejoined: "Are you sure?" and Adam confessed that he was not sure, though it seemed to him surprising that he had no certainty of such a leading question in his most intimate friend's life.

"He's a remarkable man," Miss Durward said, "highly remarkable. I never met any man like him."

"Nor did I," said Adam fervently.

"He is so intellectual, so witty, I would call him a genius," said Miss Durward.

"He's all that," said Adam.

He thought her a trifle volatile when she queried: "Have you seen *What Rot!*" Then memory began to work.

"No," said Adam, "but I think I know what you mean. It's a play, isn't it?"

"Oh, it's more than that," said Miss Durward, "It's a work of art." Adam holding his tongue, she continued: "I see in the *Telegraph* that Mr. Oswald Onsin is going to revive it at the Grand."

"Is he?" said Adam lamely.

"He is," Miss Durward insisted, "so that's good news for everybody. I'm sure we want cheerful things these times and he's such a beautiful actor. I suppose you've seen him heaps of times?"

In London

"I don't think I've ever seen him," said Adam, being actually perfectly sure that he had not.

"Oh, indeed!" Miss Durward exclaimed. "I suppose you don't often come to London?" Adam was trying to make up his mind whether to confess that this was his first visit to the metropolis, when Miss Durward went on: "I'll tell you what we'll do. . . . You're not engaged to-night, are you? . . . I see you're not; then we'll go to the Grand Theatre and you shall see him act and tell me if you don't think him perfectly lovely." Taking Adam's silence for consent she went to the telephone, but hesitated with her hand on the receiver. "I'm afraid they're only playing Shakespeare. Will that bore you?"

Adam found his tongue: "Oh, not at all," he said eagerly. "Which play is it?"

Miss Durward named a play which Adam did not recognise; for it sounded like "Muchadoorasu," and rang up a number in the Kensington exchange, holding a conversation of which Adam caught this part. "Hallo, hallo! . . . Is that Fox Mount Lodge? . . . Miss Durward speaking. . . . Is Mrs. Onsin in? . . . Do please. . . . Hallo! . . . Mrs. On— Oh, that's you, Belle. . . . I'm Connie speaking. . . . Connie Durward, yes. . . . Still in bed are you? . . . Where's Oswald? . . . Oh! I've a young gentleman with me. . . . Rubbish! . . . Ah, go on! . . . I'm not like you. . . . All right, I'll wait till you've finished." Miss Durward appealed to Adam. "You'd think she'd have finished breakfast by this."

"Artists," said Adam gravely, "particularly actors . . ." but Miss Durward did not allow him to say any more, but called into the receiver: "Look here, Belle! All I want to know is whether you're doing——" and there followed another mysterious name "'Asuormuchado' to-night?" And then the mystery was explained. "Oh, it's 'Muchado,' is it? And tell me, are you and Oswald both playing?"

Adam finds Anchorage

Very well, then, can you keep me two stalls for to-night? The young gentleman that's with me is just dying to see you and Oswald act. He's come all the way from Dublin. It's perfectly true my dear what I'm telling you, and what's more he's a friend of Mr. Macarthy's. . . . Stephen Macarthy's, yes." She turned to Adam. "It was Mr. Stephen Macarthy sent you, wasn't it?"

Adam tried to explain that Mr. Stephen Macarthy had not actually sent him but Miss Durward would not listen. "Yes, Belle," she reiterated into the telephone, "He's just come from Dublin, from Stephen Macarthy, and he has a message for you with his love and a kiss. . . . The Royal Box, did you say? Yes, dear, if it isn't wanted. No, we'll not be late. . . . Eight o'clock. . . . All right. Good-bye." She rang off.

Adam conscientiously endeavouring not to listen or to wonder what Mrs. Onsin was having for breakfast, though himself conscious of a desire for luncheon, let his eye rove up and down the walls. The lady's sanctum with which he had been most familiar in Dublin, that of his landlady, Miss Gannon, had been full of faded portraits of holy men in dog-collars, who could not be mistaken for anything but Irish priests, with their air of plump asceticism. Miss Durward's atmosphere was quite otherwise. She had many photographs too, but hers represented handsome, clean-shaven men smiling so cheerfully that their teeth almost leaped out of their mouths, and handsome, hairy ladies, so full of the joy of life that the other features of their faces appeared to have retired altogether behind their teeth. Ladies and gentlemen alike were in evening dress, but with this difference, that the fronts of the gentlemen were rigidly stiff while the ladies presented backs so loosely covered as to tempt the lively eye to travel unhindered farther than Adam would have thought proper. He was already pink when Miss

In London

Durward, quitting the telephone, said to him: "You'll remember to kiss Belinda when you see her to-night."

Yet pinker was Adam as he ejaculated: "Belinda?"

"Belinda Bellingham; Mrs. Onsin, you know," Miss Durward explained, obviously wondering that explanation should be needed.

"But won't she be on the stage?" Adam faltered.

"Of course she will," said Miss Durward, "she's doing Rosalind or Beatrice or whatever it's called. He's awfully good as Benedick—but we'll see her in her dressing-room afterwards."

"Oh!" Adam interjected, much impressed.

Miss Durward went on: "And remember you've got to kiss her then. . . . That's why we've got the Royal Box."

"I don't understand," said Adam. "What has the Royal Box got to do with my kissing anybody?"

Miss Durward asked him a question which it seemed to him he had been called upon to answer every week of his life: "How old are you?" and when she was told that he was not yet seventeen she in her turn expressed surprise. "But, anyhow," she said, "You've got to kiss Mrs. Onsin because, you know, I've told her that Mr. Macarthy had sent her a kiss by you. . . ."

"Did she believe that?" Adam broke in.

"I tell you," said Miss Durward, "she's given us the Royal Box. D'you think she'd do that for nothing? Remember now, you've got to give her a nice kiss and say that it's from Mr. Macarthy."

"But it isn't!" said Adam.

"That doesn't matter in the least," said Miss Durward. "She won't mind having one from you, anyhow." She added with sudden austerity: "You're so young."

"But," Adam argued, "I don't think Mr. Macarthy would like me to do anything of the kind."

Adam finds Anchorage

"Oh, get out," said Miss Durward, and ignoring his effort to continue the discussion, headed him off with the question: "And are you going to stay long in London, tell me?"

Adam here rallied his forces to the attack of an important position and said with a successful air of nonchalance: "That depends on whether I can find comfortable rooms."

Miss Durward looked at him. "Have you only just come?" she asked, and reading the answer in his eyes, said: "Well, now, I call that a great piece of luck. I mean," said she, "that poor Captain de Frece had to go back to the front so suddenly." She added apologetically: "He had only a bedroom; the house is so full. . . . Would a bedroom be enough for you?"

Adam saying with a lighter heart that anything would be enough for him, Miss Durward said: "That's lucky now, you can have poor Captain de Frece's bedroom, and I dare say you wouldn't mind having your meals here with me?" and, taking his answer for granted, she went on: "You haven't come to London to join the Army, I hope, for you're too young for that, though they want men dreadfully in France, Captain de Frece says. . . . Has Mr. Macarthy told you whether he thinks America will come in. . . . One o'clock, you'll not have had lunch?"

Adam confessing almost too readily that he had not had lunch nor any meal since an early hour, she rang the bell and busied herself with opening out a folding table and laying a cloth on it, talking the while. "Don't on any account forget to give Mrs. Onsin that kiss to-night from Mr. Macarthy, for she always says I'm a liar, and I want to prove to her that I'm not."

"But it isn't true, is it?" Adam appealed to her: "And I really can't imagine Mr. Macarthy doing anything of the kind."

In London

"Don't be ridiculous," Miss Durward answered, without appearing to pay much attention to what Adam said. "Of course he does."

"But Mr. Macarthy," said Adam, "is not young."

"He's as young as you or I," replied Miss Durward bafflingly. "And, anyhow, what does it matter? You've just got to kiss Belinda and make her a pretty speech, and that's no great hardship for an Irishman, is it?"

Adam was seized with qualms: it seemed to him that one might pay too high a price even for the honour of sitting in the Royal Box at Mr. Onsin's theatre. But he was silent until Miss Durward, having given some directions to a male domestic, vaguely suggesting a Continental equivalent of Adam's godfather, Mr. O'Toole, in the days when he was an extra waiter at Dublin Castle, said: "Before we lunch you'll like to see your room. . . . It's just as poor Captain de Frece left it, but there's a clean towel, and I'll have the other things changed before we get back from the theatre."

Adam noticed in the bedroom looking-glass that his cheeks were very red. The apartment was on the third floor, but it held a large and comfortable-looking bed, and its pleasant outlook south across the square recalled to him Mr. Macarthy's bedroom, which was, however, in other respects quite different. Mr. Macarthy's pictures, for instance, were sober to the verge of what the gilded youth of Dublin called boredom, whereas this bedroom which Miss Durward offered him had its walls well-nigh covered by black-framed French prints of nude ladies. Miss Durward, catching his startled eye, said glibly: "You'll excuse the naughty pictures, won't you? They're not my taste, I needn't say. They're a little souvenir of Mr. Bouchier-Bellingham, Mrs. Onsin's brother; he left owing me a lot of money so I didn't

16

Adam finds Anchorage

know what to do with them. . . . Besides, he's in the trenches now and I thought it would be heartless to take them down. What would you advise me to do with them? "

"Burn them," said Adam firmly. Miss Durward looked at him commiseratingly: "I'm keeping you from washing your hands," said she: "You know your way downstairs."

Chapter Three

ADAM WRITES TO MR. MACARTHY

As Adam descended the staircase alone he perceived that the walls of the corridors and a couple of rooms, glanced at through doors ajar, were hung with prints after more or less familiar theatrical portraits. Garrick as Richard III. and Mrs. Siddons in the big hat in which she sat to Gainsborough, were conspicuous, and on one landing hung Maclise's picture of Malvollo's wooing, and on another Millais's presentation of Ophelia's death by misadventure. Adam stayed a moment to look at this, wondering whether if he had been drowned in the Liffey his fate would have been chosen for treatment by a member of the Hibernian Academy. Remembering that Barbara Burns, before she had married Mr. Leaper-Carahar, C.B., had told him subject-pictures were out of date, he dismissed the sad but not unpleasant thought from his mind, exchanging it for the on the whole more agreeable attempt to guess what Miss Durward would give him for luncheon. Fate in a pleasant mood decreed that it should be fish.

"Upstairs I thought you were in love," Miss Durward said, giving him a second helping of plaice, "but now I see you're not."

"I am," said Adam; for he could not bear to sail under false colours.

"Since when?" said Miss Durward, rather archly, Adam thought, for a woman of her age.

He answered austerely: "Ever since I can remember," but when she demanded the name of

Adam Writes to Mr. Macarthy

the object of such faithfulness, he weakened the impression by confessing that he was not sure.

"I see," said Miss Durward, "you're just like all boys, in love with petticoats."

Adam protested that petticoats meant nothing to him, and to escape from what he deemed a perilous discussion, asked Miss Durward if she were on the stage.

"How could I be," said Miss Durward, "and run a lodging-house at the same time?"

"But you seem very fond of the theatre," Adam said, "and you know a great deal about it, don't you?"

"Oh, I'm fond of it enough," Miss Durward sighed, "and if it wasn't for the house here I'd be tempted by it sometimes. . . . Not young parts, you know, I've too much sense for that, but Belinda wanted me to play the nurse to her Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* they call it; she said Shakespeare wrote the part for me, not that I believe that, I needn't tell you."

"No," said Adam rather flatly, adding: "It's rather coarse, isn't it?"

"Is it?" said Miss Durward, "Belinda didn't tell me that. I couldn't stand anything coarse." She rose from her place and selected a volume from the shelf. "Really coarse, is it?" Adam was alarmed that she was going to look for the coarse passages then and there, but she laid it down, saying: "That'll keep till bedtime." Adam breathed again. "I always read myself to sleep," she explained, "but Shakespeare's very hard to understand unless you see him acted. I suppose you've seen most of his plays?"

"Oh, no," said Adam deprecatingly.

"I am surprised at that," said his hostess. "I'd have thought Mr. Macarthy would bring you to everything; he's got such good taste and can get free seats."

In London

Adam indignantly protested: "Mr. Macarthy always pays when he goes to the theatre."

"I call that dreadful waste of money," said she, "to pay for a thing when you can get it for nothing."

Adam looked at her open-eyed. "But how would a theatre pay if every one went in free?"

Her answer to this question was simplicity itself: "Very few theatres pay, whether people go in free or not."

"But how do they keep open then?" Adam insisted.

"Very few of them keep open for long," said Miss Durward, and he felt it useless to pursue the subject.

"Mind you," said Miss Durward, "the Onsin's are different from other managers; he's such a clever man, and what is more important he has such wonderful luck, I don't think he has one failure in three, and of course a success like *What Rot!* would pay for ten ordinary failures. It wouldn't surprise me if now with the war on he made a fresh fortune out of this revival of it. Read that." She handed Adam the newspaper.

Adam read: "It will be agreeable news to the many admirers of Mr. Oswald Onsin and Miss Belinda Bellingham that when the successful run of Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* comes to an end at the palatial house in Regent Street it will be succeeded, not by *As You Like It*, as originally intended, but by Mr. Onsin's own play which first brought him fame, *What Rot!* Mr. Onsin feels that this is more suitable to the strenuous times we live in than Shakespeare's perhaps too literary comedy. Many will sympathise with Mr. Onsin in the sentiment that those on leave from the front do not wish to be reminded of the grim realities they leave behind by such incidents as the combat between Orlando and Charles the Wrestler. Whatever fault Aristotle might find in the story of Mr. Onsin's great play, which has now been performed in one or other part of the globe not far short of

Adam Writes to Mr. Macarthy

five thousand times, which means that the Pit tickets alone if laid end to end would be sufficient to encircle the German Fleet (as Mr. Rubinstein, the courteous Acting Manager at the Grand Theatre, informs us to be his estimate); the author modestly claims for it that it contains no reference to the war. Although he is revising the story so that it may be in every way up-to-date, Mr. Onsin informs us that it will retain this merit when he gives it to the public, probably on Easter Monday. Needless to add, both he and his gifted partner, Miss Bellingham, will appear in their original parts of Lord Algy Taplow and Lady Lucina Lovelace."

"I only wish they were doing it to-night instead of Shakespeare," Miss Durward explained. "I do think Shakespeare awfully slow, though Oswald Onsin is good in it, as he is in everything."

"Is he?" said Adam, seeing that he was expected to say something. "And is Mrs. Onsin very good, too?"

"Gentlemen like her," Miss Durward told him, "and so do I, off the stage. . . . She's the dearest friend I have off the stage."

"How did you come to know her?" Adam asked, "since you never acted yourself?"

"Oh, that was a long time ago," his hostess answered readily, "when I was head of the under-clothing at Peacock and Ethelred. She got all the lingerie she wore in the original show of *What Rot!* from me." She smiled brightly: "So it's no wonder I take an interest in *What Rot!* is it?"

"I'm sure it must be very interesting," Adam said, politely stifling all accent of doubt.

"Oh, most interesting," Miss Durward insisted, "and that apart from the fact that a great part of the play, indeed you might say the whole of the play, was written in that very room you're going to sleep in to-night."

"Oh!" Adam ejaculated, really moved by this news which seemed to bring him definitely in touch

In London

with the great world of London. "Did Mr. Onsin stay here as well as his brother-in-law?"

But his hostess failed to take in this question by reason of the ringing of the telephone bell. Immediately on putting her ear to the receiver she turned to Adam and suggested that he would like to retire to his room and rest himself. And Adam, understanding that his presence was momentarily undesirable, withdrew upstairs.

He did not lie down, however, but finding writing material on a small table by one of the windows he sat down to write a letter to his guardian:—

"MY DEAR MR. MACARTHY," said he, "as I wired you from Bristol I am safe and sound, and I only hope that I caused you no anxiety on my account. Things happened that upset me the last day I saw you. I'll tell you about them some day, but can't in this letter. I don't quite know myself yet what happened. As you know there was a fog, and in the fog I somehow fell into the Liffey. I suppose I threw myself in, but when I found myself there it seemed to me I hadn't really meant to. And I was awfully ashamed to think that my selfishness if I was drowned might worry you. You who have been so good to me. I won't say more, but I got out somehow and found myself on the Bristol boat. The same old boat I used to watch from the Custom House steps opposite Liberty Hall when I was quite a young lad. I wasn't more than seven then. Anyhow, I got to Bristol. And as I wired you from Bristol, came on to London. If you don't mind, I'd like to stay in London, rather than go back to Dublin just yet. I feel I could make my living here if you could let me have money to carry on for a week or two. Of course I've not made any money since I was very young, but I'm sure I could. I don't know how. This is a very long letter, so I won't say any more. You will recognise the address.

Adam Writes to Mr. Macarthy

I found the house through seeing Mr. de Frece, who is a captain now and just gone back to France, coming out of it. He looked very sad, not like he used to look at the Six Muses. I have his room, which is lucky, as there is no other. To-night I am going with Miss Durward to see Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*. Mrs. Oswald Onsin, whose name perhaps you remember, is playing in it, and Miss Durward says I am to give her a kiss from you. But of course I won't as I know you would not like me to do anything of the kind. Miss Durward is a funny lady but extremely hospitable. She gave me plaice for lunch. And I could not help thinking it queer that I should be eating plaice instead of plaice eating me. But I said nothing to Miss Durward about my being drowned. I think she might not understand. I am very comfortable but homesick for Mountjoy Square. Please ask every one to excuse me if I have given them inconvenience. I heard a lot of firing on the sea and saw a warship doing it between Dublin and Bristol. They are reviving *What Rot!* at the Grand. Miss Durward says it was written in his room I am going to sleep in to-night. There are also pictures on the walls you would not care for. But, of course, I find even the smallest things interesting in London. I hope I have not spelt anything wrong. Good-bye, dear Mr. Macarthy, I am as always your affectionate little friend, ADAM."

As he appended his name to this epistle Adam was conscious of something percolating between his cheek and nose and blotting his signature. Hastily he blew his nose, hearing knuckles on the door at the same moment that the handle turned. "May I come in?" said Miss Durward.

"Yes, yes, do, do," Adam answered emotionally.

"Whatever have you been crying about?" his hostess demanded in a tone more genuinely

In London

sympathetic than he had yet heard her use, though indeed she had been cordial from the outset.

Adam answered simply : " I've been writing to Mr. Macarthy," as if that explained everything.

Miss Durward did not pursue the subject. " I came to ask about your clothes," said she. " I suppose you left them at Euston or did you tell me you came by Paddington ? "

" I came by Paddington," said Adam, and reopened his letter, " but I didn't bring any clothes. I must ask Mr. Macarthy to have them sent on."

He read misgivings in Miss Durward's face. " It's lucky there's a war on," said she, " so it won't look so odd you're being in the Royal Box in morning dress."

" Perhaps I'd better not go," Adam suggested, though he hoped the proposal would not be accepted.

" Oh, it won't matter at all," Miss Durward said. " I'll wear enough for both of us, and you can sit in the back of the box and people will think you're my son from Eton."

" Have you a son at Eton ? " Adam asked absent-mindedly, then added confusedly : " I beg your pardon."

" You ought indeed," said Miss Durward apparently without taking great offence. " I suppose you think because I haven't the heart to burn poor Bouchier-Bellingham's pictures, or send them to be sold for the Red Cross, that I'm no better than an actress."

" I never thought anything of the kind," Adam assured her.

" Didn't you ? " said Miss Durward laughing. " And what do you know about actresses, anyhow ? "

Adam was too discreet to say what he knew about actresses, but he could not resist the temptation of trying to look as if he knew a lot. " Well, whether you do or you don't," Miss Durward concluded, " you'd better go out and buy yourself a clean collar and shirt to kiss Mrs. Onsin in."

Chapter Four

"MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING"

FROM Norfolk Square Adam was taken by his hostess in a taxi-cab to the Grand Theatre. Under her direction he had bought at a shop opposite Paddington Station a white shirt, a white collar, and a black satin tie to replace his of green Irish poplin, which she said was unsuited to evening wear even had it not been stained by water. His lounge suit was also the worse for its immersion in the Liffey, but as he had worn it that day for the first time and it happened to be a particularly nice suit, Miss Durward said that he might wear it, and did not insist on his hiring a suit for the occasion, as she rather hinted was properly his duty to the Royal Box. "Mr. Macarthy may be a socialist," she said, "but I never knew any one who knew better what was what, and the Royal Box is after all the Royal Box." Still, she permitted Adam, having changed his blue collar and shirt for white and his green tie for black, to cling to the rest of his apparel.

And indeed she was right in thinking that her full dress would cover many discrepancies on the part of her companion. As Adam could not describe it we shall not expose ourselves to criticism by attempting any description here, but it is safe to say that the modest lady whose prescriptive right it was to occupy the box had never dreamed of anything like it in all her days and nights. But there is no record of her commanding frock, frill nor furbelow from Mr. Peacock nor yet Mr. Ethelred

In London

(known to his neighbours at the Greenroom Club as Ethelred the Unready.) The odd thing, as Adam thought, about Miss Durward's costume was that although it appeared to fill the taxi, covering all her seat and a great share of his, there was but little of it covering her own ample self. He believed the predominant note of it to be purple, or as some would say, lilac, and others mauve.

But from the moment of leaving the house until they arrived at the theatre, Adam was hardly conscious of his companion, being engrossed and a little alarmed by the mysterious flight of the taxi through the dark, and, as it seemed to him, oddly silent streets. Used to the resonant paving of Dublin which multiplied every crash of tram-car, motor-lorry, iron-tyred, horse-drawn vehicles, far commoner there than here, to say nothing of the hammer of horses' hoofs and the heavy boots of civilians as well as soldiers, it seemed to Adam that London was tumultuous with ghosts; armies of them, rushing in and out ghastly-wise in the glimmer of muffled lamps reflected greenly on their faces: he wondered at the temerity of their chauffeur, hooting defiantly as he plunged into mid-stream in what he afterwards recognised as the Edgware Road, and across the alternate spaces and defiles of Mayfair, all black as pitch, into Piccadilly, and across an angle of what Miss Durward told him was St. James's Square, into a short queue of vehicles, all power-driven and mostly hackneys, successively jerking out their occupants on to a green baize which covered the pavement at the theatre entrance.

Of the exterior of the theatre Adam grasped nothing except that it was very big and much be-pillared. . . . Let us confess at once that the architecture was Byzanto-Palladian of the late Victorian variety: Mr. Oswald Onsin had collaborated with the contractor in adapting a design by his then Imperial Majesty, William II., for an

“ Much Ado About Nothing ”

aquarium, to the purposes of a theatre. Anyhow, lighted up, the vestibule presented a magnificent effect compared with the nebulous darkness outside. What elements constituted this magnificence he had no time to judge, being conscious only of three stately and beautiful ladies in evening dress, second only to Miss Durward's, advancing graciously to meet them. One took his hat and stick after mechanically offering to remove his coat ; one offered him a programme, and one took their tickets. He supposed they were relatives of Mr. or Mrs. Oswald Onsin's until Miss Durward gave perhaps the most distinguished one a shilling, and she said in quite an ordinary voice : “ Thank you, miss.” So he gave the lady devoted more particularly to himself a florin and was rewarded by a softly murmured : “ Ta, old dear.” He blushed and was grateful that Miss Durward was out of ear-shot. He hurried after her.

When they were alone in the Royal Box Miss Durward, still further loosening her costume, said : “ I do think Mr. Onsin runs this theatre beautifully. Having three ladies is much better than two flunkies like Herbert Tree's round the corner. It's just as stylish and it makes you feel more at home. . . . Besides, Peacock and Ethelred pay him five hundred a year for the advertisement.”

“ Advertisement of what ? ” Adam asked, astonished.

“ Why the robes, of course,” said Miss Durward. “ These three girls are all trained mannequins ; didn't you see the way they moved from the hips ? ”

Adam did not answer this question : he wished he had not seen it ; particularly he wished . . . but his wishes were lost in the strains of Mr. Onsin's orchestra, which to attune the minds of the audience to the atmosphere of Messina in the Middle Ages were playing “ It's a Long Way to Tipperary,” with scholarly variations by their conductor whose

In London

name appeared on the programme as Mr. Solomon Joystone. But Adam was not critical; he was prepared to believe every claim set forth by Miss Durward on behalf of Mr. Onsin and his theatre. It was manifestly very large, very well lighted, and after the Dublin theatres, it seemed to Adam, beautifully kept. The Royal Box was an epitome of comfort, with a little private lavatory in one corner. Adam longed to go into this so that he might complete his acquaintance with the ways of kings in their lighter phases, but was bashful about doing so before Miss Durward, though she herself used it to powder her nose.

Mr. Joystone had not exhausted all the possibilities of "Tipperary," when he changed it for a few bars of what Adam had heard Mr. Macarthy call oleaginous Italian music, and the curtain rose. It had not been up five minutes when Adam felt himself on fire. . . . Lord knows how or why, unless perhaps it was that she wore green and gold, Mrs. Onsin as Beatrice reminded him of Barbara. And what a delightful part was Beatrice! In the reading it had seemed to him dull, but then he had read it at Clongowes when he was a mere schoolboy of thirteen, needing to look up every other word in the glossary, and then very often left in doubt. But now Shakespeare, and more particularly through the mouth of Mrs. Onsin (adequately trained, be it said, in the tradition of Ellen Terry) spoke to him in a language that was become his own. From her first question, "I pray you, is Signor Mountanto returned from the wars or no?" he felt himself longing to converse with her across the footlights. . . . And how delightful it was when Benedick came on and said for him just the very things he would have said for himself, if in more diffident language. He wished he had had the wit to say to Barbara Burns before she took the fatal step which made her the legal prize of Mr. Leaper-Carahar, C.B.:

“ Much Ado About Nothing ”

“ It is certain I am loved of all ladies, only you excepted : and I would I could find in my heart that I had not a hard heart ; for, truly, I love none.” He forgot for the moment that there was scant foundation for this statement. He only considered how well it sounded as Mr. Oswald Onsin said it. Mr. Onsin was indeed on the stage a highly taking lover, and, he gathered from Miss Durward, a no less successful one off it. Now Adam would have thought it a dreadful thing to be a rakish fellow in real life ; but it occurred to him at that moment that it would be the most delightful of all occupations to play the very devil with women, particularly if they resembled Barbara, but even if they did not in that harmless world of lath and canvas where the loosest morals lead to no worse fate than to be lowered down a trap-door in a red or green light.

It was a stage-struck Adam that helped to call Mr. and Mrs. Onsin before the curtain at the end of the play, though even then his candid vision saw at once that they looked less agreeable before the curtain than behind it. Still less attractive did he find them when Miss Durward, whom every one seemed to know, led him by a labyrinthine way behind the scenes to a sort of tiny drawing-room that lay between the dressing-rooms of the famous pair. Mrs. Onsin reclined on a sofa drinking beef-tea, while Mr. Onsin, his wig pushed to the back of his head, sat on a desk scowling at his Box Office return. “ Damn Shakespeare,” he was saying as they came in.

“ Under a hundred again, my dear,” Mrs. Onsin said to Miss Durward by way of apology for her husband’s distracted manner. She looked at Adam approvingly. “ Come and give me that kiss from Mr. Macarthy,” she said ; “ I want something to cheer me up.” Intercepting Adam’s glance at the actor she went on : “ Oh, he won’t mind, Oswald knows which side his bread is buttered.”

In London

"There won't be butter for any one's bread," the manager said savagely, "if this war goes on." He qualified the war with one of the most familiar of all adjectives, which, however, Mr. Macarthy had advised Adam not to use.

A happy thought occurred to Adam. He knelt and kissed the fair Belinda's hand. The movement caught Mr. Onsin's eye and he asked with professional interest: "Who taught you to do that?"

Adam turned to him with his ever-ready blushes: "I wasn't taught," said he, "I did it because I felt like it."

Mr. Onsin eyed him curiously. "And who taught you to speak like that?"

"No need to ask that," Mrs. Onsin murmured.

"You must be pretty young," the manager pursued. "How long have you been on the stage?"

"Never," said Adam, "except that I walked on once at the Abbey."

"Oh! You're one of the Irish Players, are you?" Mr. Onsin said. "But you haven't any Irish accent." And it was a fact that, except in moments of excitement, Adam had very little or none at all of what is called in the theatrical profession, an Irish accent.

Adam's truthful soul was for denying that he was an Irish player but Mrs. Onsin forestalled him by saying: "And sure and arrah acushla machree why haven't you no broguee atall atall no mor than my hat?" which she appeared to conceive to be idiomatic Gaelic. She added to her husband: "I see you're thinking of him for Ned Burke."

"How wonderful of you! quite ideal!" Miss Durward gasped incomprehensibly. Mr. Onsin silenced both women with his hand, continuing to address himself to his youthful visitor: "You say you've never acted outside the Abbey, which doesn't count. . . . But you'd like a job on the real stage, the London, or more or less London stage, wouldn't you?"

“ Much Ado About Nothing ”

“ I would,” said Adam promptly ; for this idea, so magically arrived at by Mr. Onsin, had sprung to full life in Adam’s brain at the moment Mr. Onsin himself had swung, triumphantly insolent, yet not discourteous, to address Beatrice as “ dear Lady Disdain.”

“ Very good then,” said the actor, “ come and see me here at eleven o’clock to-morrow morning. That’ll do for to-night, you’d better be getting home.”

Miss Durward accepted uncomplainingly this abrupt dismissal. “ Come along, dear,” she said.

But Mrs. Onsin broke in : “ What’s the hustle, Ossie ? We don’t even know his name yet.”

“ Time enough for that to-morrow,” said the great man impressively.

“ Oh, Tosh ! ” cried his spouse, and the expletive was, as it were, emphasised by a thunderous crash which made Adam leap from his chair and stand bewildered while it was repeated again and again and yet again.

“ The Huns ! ” screamed Mrs. Onsin.

Her husband nodded portentously. “ I had the warning half an hour ago.”

With trembling hands Mrs. Onsin flung a fur coat around herself. “ You beast, why didn’t you tell me ? ”

The actor said harshly : “ I wasn’t going to have my last act ruined by hysterics, Huns or no Huns . . . but the sooner we all get home the better.”

Miss Durward was already out of the door, and Adam saw he had no choice but to pursue her. The lift shaft was in darkness, so they ran down the stairs, a dizzy spiral, to the street where, no vehicle being visible save those in heedless motion up and down Regent Street and the Haymarket, she led him at a trot to the Piccadilly Tube Station, the exterior lights of which had been all extinguished. She booked for Paddington by Bakerloo : they had

In London

to stand. Adam's first experience of an Underground railway and the crashing and roaring of that overloaded train so tightly packed into the cylinder through which it sped, suggested to him that an aerial action was in progress overhead. It seemed to him that he was being swayed by Fate between the alternatives of becoming at once the principal actor in England and of perishing like a rat in a hole. He deemed it cruel of the gods to threaten him with cutting short so soon his promising career: he could not credit that he had tried to take his own life a week ago. Now he felt himself to be the richest drop of the world's blood rushing through its iron veins.

Chapter Five

THE PORTAL OF FAME

EMERGING from the tube at Paddington at the quick step, and Miss Durward saying little, and that hardly above a whisper, lest she should draw the enemy's fire, Adam had crossed Praed Street in doubt whether it could be the same thoroughfare he had so closely inspected twelve hours ago. For it was now midnight, though no bell rang to advertise the time ; for the churches were as circumspect as his companion. All lamps were out, and for the first time he was conscious of giant scissors of light opening and snapping together in the sky as though striving to snip off pieces of the firmament. Far away eastward the ear caught an intermittent thudding, unimpressive compared with the four great crashes of warning or even the roar of the Underground train battering its way through the Tube. But those fiery scissors working in the empyrean were cataclysmal in their menace, as though they portended war between the Titans and the gods. London, which had become a solid fairyland in the theatre, had slid into nothingness again, and Norfolk Square was but the profile of walls of a dead city.

Miss Durward's house was dark within, and though she switched on a light for him to find his way upstairs, she counselled him to go to bed by moonlight, and he had barely reached his door when the stair light was switched off again. Adam's mind went back to a bull's-eye lantern he had purchased with almost the first money he could call his own,

In London

long, long ago before wars were ; he wished he had that lantern with him now ; this thought brought on home-sickness. He did not want to be a great actor, he wanted to be back in Dublin, pretending he was in Greece, with the aid of that bull's-eye lantern and the late Mr. Keats.

The panic roused by the four sinister crashes in the coulisses of the Grand Theatre had momentarily swept him away in the same current with his hostess, and in the Tube, where she had felt herself comparatively safe, he had sweated with terror, but now that he was alone again quietly thinking, his sense of humour brought him back peace, and he laughed at the absurdity of what he had seen. Apart from its vulgar pageantry he had no fear of death beyond the natural reaction of healthy young flesh and blood against atrophy. Even in the Tube he had been less terrified at the thought of his own sudden end than by the vision of that mass of humanity around him suddenly reduced to a great clot of blood and smouldering filth.

Groping his way across the room without mishap he drew the blinds and flung wide the window. The giant scissors were still snapping at the moon or turning catherine wheels in impotent delirium. As he leaned out, watching, he thought the thudding receded rather than advanced. Below him nothing stirred but the tree-tops in the square ruffled by the spring wind. . . The spring, the vernal equinox, what a wind it has to be sure. It blew him a vision of himself playing Benedick ; Dublin was again forgotten and he was now managing the Grand Theatre, and a lady with all the charms of Barbara Burns, now Mrs. Leaper-Carahar, and Josephine O'Meagher, now in religion Sister Veronica, and Caroline Brady, now no more, combined with the professional technique of Mrs. Oswald Onsin, formerly Miss Belinda Bellingham, was calling him with the mockery of Beatrice, but a great deal of

The Portal of Fame

truth, "A dear happiness to women." He turned with the pride of Chanticleer from the window to find the saucy moon playing all too brightly on Mrs. Onsin's brother's art collection, blushed for the last time, and went to bed in his under-vest, having forgotten to buy pyjamas. Instantly, air-raid or no air-raid (in the phrase of Mr. Onsin) Adam slept.

The next thing he knew was the incredible amiability of his godfather in coming all the way from Dublin and so early in the morning to offer him a cup of tea. . . . He rubbed his eyes. . . . No, after all it was not Mr. Byron O'Toole, it was merely Tomasso, as Miss Durward called her ministering angel, notwithstanding his desire for her to call him more familiarly, Toeme.

This affable Italian's mastery of English was imperfect, but he suffered Adam to understand that it was eight o'clock, that he could have his bath at half-past, and Miss Durward would look for him to join her at breakfast by nine. As Tomasso was leaving the room, Adam stayed him by a request for sugar with his tea, and he returned to the bedside with profoundly apologetic gesticulations which served also to indicate a small phial half concealed by the saucer. Adam reading on the label the word "Saccharine," remembered the war and therefore also its knockings last night so near their door. He asked if there was any news of the raid, but this highly technical question, in accents to which Tomasso was unaccustomed, became to him an inquiry as to whether the bath was ready; and so repeating his statement that it would be at half-past eight, he bowed himself out, all smiles and apologies.

That Tomasso should be so little impressed by the raid would have given Adam food for thought but that he was anxious to escape from Mr. Bellingham's picture gallery to the bathroom. . . . Besides, had

In London

he not his interview with Mr. Onsin, fixed for eleven o'clock that morning, to think about? And think about it he did with joyous futility until he found himself sitting opposite his hostess at the folding table in her den. Then the raid recurred to him again and he could not help wondering that Miss Durward said nothing about it, but this lady, so woebegone and panic-stricken when she fled from him in the darkness last night, with the obvious intention of making her bedclothes a last line of defence against the destroying angels, was this morning as blithe as ever in a kimono which left more to be desired than imagined.

There was this to be said for Miss Durward that she was as clean as Adam himself, indeed perhaps cleaner, in as much as she had taken a hot bath and he a cold one. Her whole house was redolent of soap and brass-polish, and even Tomasso, if his nails were as black as Mr. O'Toole's, showed a passably white dicky under his waistcoat and his face was far from dirty. This was all the more praiseworthy of Tomasso, for that he wore a heavy moustache of that kind which Victorian cavalry officers shared with the heroes of the concert platform: he had been such a hero, though unrecognised. So he had drifted into his present more remunerative employment: he had a sweet voice better suited to this than his former profession, since it was inaudible at a distance. Those who could hear it described it as abnormally alto; and for the rest, his country did not call him to her colours, and he was too modest to go without calling. "He is a topping servant," said his mistress, "but no earthly for anything else."

She said this when Adam told her of his conversational cross-purposes with Tomasso between the air-raid and the bath. But she herself said nothing about the air-raid, preferring to turn the conversation on to the more promising topic of Adam's future on

The Portal of Fame

the stage. "I felt it in my bones," said she, "that he'd do something for you the moment he saw you."

"Why did you think that?" asked Adam modestly.

"Oh," she returned, "lots of things. . . . You have an actor's face."

"What is an actor's face?" Adam asked, not being sure whether to take this as a compliment or not.

"An actor's face," she readily informed him, "is a face like yours," and after that their conversation revolved rather than advanced.

He broke through the circle by the question: "What exactly does he want me for?"

"To try you for a part, sure," she said.

"In what?" he asked.

"Well, it sounded as if he wanted you for the revival of *What Rot!* but that seems impossible, for Oswald wouldn't dream of putting an inexperienced actor he had to act with himself in a part in London," she added, "and Ned Burke's a good part too. . . . Unless of course he's saying some of the speeches himself in the revised version."

So Adam did not know quite what to expect when, leaving the Tube at Piccadilly Circus, he marched down Regent Street in the brisk spring air and at the eleventh hour presented himself at the stage-door of the Grand Theatre. Asking buoyantly for Mr. Onsin he received for some moments no attention from the occupant of the lodge, who was reading his newspaper. When Adam repeated the question in a voice that could hardly be denied, the man looked up at him over the paper and said: "Why ain't ye at the Front?"

Adam guessed his meaning but amused himself by replying that Mr. Onsin had desired him to come behind; whereupon the good man decided to lay

In London

down his newspaper, saying gruffly : " Well, any-oweyain'tereyet." Which Adam interpreted as meaning that the manager was not yet come.

The man making no suggestion, Adam, a trifle disgruntled, hung about the door for a quarter of an hour during which nothing happened more exciting than the passing of a stage hand or fireman. At twenty past eleven two ladies drifted in, and after that there was a fairly constant trickle of rather elderly actors ; and then suddenly a not greatly significant figure in a tall hat and overcoat sprang out of a hansom and hustled past him. Had not the stage-doorkeeper drawn himself to attention and saluted, Adam had not recognised Mr. Onsin ; and Mr. Onsin bustled away with no sign of recognition of Adam.

The door-keeper eyed him with baleful contempt. " I thought you had an appointment with the governor," he said.

" Was that he ? " Adam babbled involuntarily.

The stage door-keeper spat into his fire. " Serve you right if it was 'Olinginbug," but this jest fell flat as Adam did not recognise the name of that great benefactor of the nail trade. He was mainly concerned to pursue Mr. Onsin and run him to earth at once lest he should be suspected of slackness. But the keeper discouraged any attempt to do this. " No admittance except on business, if you please ! " he growled, and flapped his newspaper in emphasis. Adam was wondering how Mr. Macarthy would have pierced such an *impasse* as this, when Mrs. Onsin, bouncing out of a Limousine, came to his rescue, as Juno descending from her chariot to succour Achilles, drove a coach and four through it.

" Hallo, old dear ! " she sang out, " hasn't Ossie come yet ? "

Ere Adam could reply, Cerberus was out of his kennel barking apologetically : " I believe I see the governor go through. . . . "

The Portal of Fame

"Then why is this gentleman waiting here?" Mrs. Onsin asked in the tone of a manageress.

But Adam was not vindictive. "I didn't recognise Mr. Onsin at once," he explained, "and of course he didn't recognise me."

"Then all I can say is," returned the actress, "that of course he should have, but I dare say it's the fault of this old idiot that his attention was not called to you."

Cerberus growled: "As much as my place is worth to call the governor's attention to anything he don't want to see."

Mrs. Onsin withered him. "It's more than your soul's worth to answer me back"; whereupon he faded out of the picture.

Admirable was the art with which Mrs. Onsin carried her voice and manner from the minatory to the seductive as she turned to Adam. "You'll think us savages, but we're not really, and Oswald will be awfully sorry to find he's kept you waiting." She led the way through the swing doors, whereupon what sounded to Adam like the roar of a baulked tiger fell upon their ears. Mrs. Onsin hesitated. "Oswald's taking a rehearsal," she explained, "and he's always nervous after an air-raid. Let's just go and sit in the stalls so that you can study his manner of production; every one says he's such a good producer, though I'm afraid he's not very fortunate with me."

Adam, meaning to be gallant, assured her that he thought her performance as Beatrice was a triumph.

"It may be," she answered, "but if it is that's in spite of Oswald and not because of him."

Adam was too ingenuous to foresee the line which their conversation was taking. "But why do you think he is less successful with you than with others?"

"Oh, my dear," said the great actress, "I hardly like to tell you. After all we don't know each other

In London

very long, do we?" They were passing now through an ever-darkening passage apparently under the stage, for Mr. Onsin's yells came from above. He was too busy groping to think of an answer. She repeated the question in a softer voice, and still getting no answer, went on: "Perhaps you feel as I do, that we've known each other all our lives," and they being now in complete darkness he was suddenly aware of her clasping him in her arms and kissing him. He yielded as to a boa-constrictor: not that he was afraid, still less that he was fascinated, but he was grateful to her for rescuing him from Cerberus, and opening the *impasse*.

Chapter Six

MORE ADO ABOUT LESS

ADAM did not resist. As they stood there in the darkness under the stage with her husband making strange outcries over their heads, it did not even occur to him that he would have cried the louder had the stage become transparent. For although on that stage he had thought the wife of the actor-manager a young and blooming beauty, beneath it she was to him merely a middle-aged lady, not of the best style, but with her heart in the right place. That she had once been wooed, as scandal said in Dublin, by not only that admirable procreator, the father of Barbara Burns, but by Mr. Macarthy himself, was incredible; and yet she said to him there in the dark: "That was from Mr. Macarthy, now give me one from yourself."

At these words Adam started, and his elbow coming in contact with an electric switch, flooded that gloomy cavern with light. "Damn!" said Mrs. Onsin, not perceiving the cause of this effect, "Who had the cheek to do that . . .? Well, anyhow, it's getting late," and, releasing him, she opened a door into the orchestra and through that they passed by a curtain into the stalls. They glided quietly and unperceived to places near the prompter's wing.

Mr. Onsin had ceased to roar and was walking up and down close to the footlights with his arm thrown paternally round a pretty young lady, not the less pretty, Adam thought, for the tears that ran down her cheeks from her great eyes turned with

In London

an air of adorable reproach upon the great man, all dulcet now as he murmured: "Picky ickle sing, mustn't cry-cry when cruel great man imparts to her his art."

Mrs. Onsin nudged Adam softly. "You see what I have to put up with from that man," she, as it were, pleaded in Adam's ear. But he made no answer; for his sympathy had already gone forth to the young lady in tears, thinking that she must be suffering more from Mr. Onsin's attentions than his wife from the absence of them. For the moment he disliked Mr. Onsin with such a wave of aversion as Mr. Leaper-Carahar set rolling when he fondled his wife.

Suddenly a panting small boy appeared from nowhere, and running after the manager as he paraded his quarry up and down, said fearfully: "Please, sir, I can't find Miss Bellingham nowhere."

Stopping dramatically, Mr. Onsin tossed back his hair with one hand while the other still compassed the waist of the girl: "So I am to be kept waiting by my own wife in my own theatre," he thundered, as though the blame for all was divided between the call-boy and the gods: "And that, although she has the use of a Government motor car while I was reduced to come down to my theatre to-day in that vehicle of prehistoric origin known as a hansom . . .!"—his tone passed to the pathetically ironical: "Ladies and gentlemen, for reasons that I need not explain to you, we cannot go on with the rehearsal until Miss Bellingham thinks fit to join us."

The words were just allowed to sink in when Mrs. Onsin, with no little agility for a woman of her weight, leaped from her place and up a step-ladder from the orchestra on to the stage. "I've been watching you and Miss Blake for the past half-hour," she blandly announced.

Mr. Onsin, releasing Miss Blake, took up the

More Ado About Less

attitude of a good man more sorrowed than angered, but Miss Blake fretfully blurted: "I like that 'half-hour.'"

"Beginners always do," answered Mrs. Onsin sweetly, and content with the effect of this repartee on Miss Blake, rehearsed her part very amiably.

Mrs. Onsin's triumph over her husband and young Miss Blake inspired her to rehearse so well that Adam felt quite interested in her, almost as much as faintly to recall his feeling of the night before, which personal contact had banished. She was utterly different on the stage and off, he thought, and thought truly; for she was so different on the stage that she forgot there the things that interested her off it, and had in fact from the moment she made her entrance quite forgotten Adam himself. Unfortunately, she did not even remember him when she made her exit, being busy with the learning of her part. Adam's heart sank; for the play, whatever it was, did not interest him much in itself, particularly when the middle-aged gentlemen, not to call them old fogies, whom he had seen enter the theatre, were rehearsing scenes in which from the words which they slowly delivered they might be supposed to be playing riotous young bucks, to an accompaniment of horrible language from the manager. But at last Miss Belinda Bellingham pranced on again, and as she did so Mr. Onsin called in a loud voice: "Miss Blake, if you will take my advice you will go down into the stalls and note how admirably Miss Bellingham plays the *ingenue* in this scene." Adam thought Miss Blake pouted as she obeyed her master. "Be careful how you go," the manager said, "it's very dark and you're not used."

"Thank you," said Miss Blake stiffly, "I can find my way quite well," and tried to come down the ladder face-foremost, failed in the attempt, and rather confusedly turned about to start afresh.

In London

This time she reached the floor safely but only to knock over a music-stand which fell with a crash of brass against another, and a whole line of them went down like a rank of tin soldiers. Mrs. Onsin sighed patiently: "It's no use my listening for my cue," said she, "until Miss Blake is quite finished."

"It's quite all right now, dear Miss Bellingham," said Miss Blake, "I am so sorry."

"Are you sure, dear Miss Blake, that you're quite safe?" called Miss Bellingham. "Please, dear," this to Mr. Onsin, "see if Miss Blake is not getting into more mischief."

Mr. Onsin threw a glance over his shoulder into the darkness. "How the deuce can I see?" said he, "she can take care of herself. . . . For the Lord's sake carry on or we'll never get done."

So Mrs. Onsin spoke her first line, but ere she could reach the second a shriek rang through the stalls. Mr. Onsin swung round. "My God! What's the matter?" he cried.

"Nothing," answered Miss Blake, to the disappointment of all concerned. But Mrs. Onsin threw down her part.

"It isn't nothing," she said determinedly. "I'll bet my boots she sat down in that boy's lap," and there was no more rehearsal until Adam had been haled on to the stage lest he should distract Miss Blake from the study of her art.

If Adam understood little of the rehearsal from the stalls, still less could he follow it from the wings: he was divided between the thrills of sitting on the stage of a London theatre and the numbness of watching the barely comprehensible from an angle that made it senseless. He gathered that, whatever the play was, Mr. Onsin was not taking it right through, but hammering at certain or uncertain excerpts here and there, stopping periodically at the critical moment to say, "Here

More Ado About Less

Miss Bellingham and I have a bit together. We needn't rehearse that, need we?" To which the stage manager would unctuously reply: "We know that will be all right!" and shout "Now Mister This or Miss That, why don't you take up your cue?" regardless of the fact that it had not been spoken. And when one of the elderly men foxing young protested that he had not heard his cue, the stage-manager would retort: "At your age you ought to know that the chief never gives them."

Adam wondered how any man able-bodied enough to drive a tram could stoop to a calling in which he might be cursed by a Mr. Onsin or jeered at by his lieutenant. He was tempted to slip out of the theatre and retire to Norfolk Square; for so far the manager had taken no notice of him, and he did not feel that he could have any grievance if he withdrew from so unpromising a situation. He was glad that he had told none of what seemed last night such a brilliant opening. Now he felt that nothing would induce him to become an actor. . . . And then he changed his mind; for a soft voice said in his ear: "I hope I didn't hurt you when I sat . . ."

He could not allow her to finish her sentence, so eager was he to assure her of his invulnerability: "On the contrary, it was delightful," said he.

"I hope," went on Miss Blake a trifle prudishly: "I do hope you didn't think I sat on your knee purposely."

"Of course not," said Adam: "Why should you? . . . I mean why should I think you would sit on my knee on purpose?"

"I think Mrs. Onsin thought she could make you think so," whispered Miss Blake.

"She may think what she likes," Adam stoutly rejoined, "but she can't make me think what I wouldn't like to think." . . . He hesitated and

In London

added: "Not that perhaps I wouldn't like to think it in some ways."

Unless it could be regarded as an answer that she suffered her eyes to sparkle, Miss Blake may be said to have ignored this speech. She asked Adam whether he had been long on the stage. Simultaneously Adam put the same question to her, and both laughed confusedly, and neither made any effort to reply. Instead, they exclaimed together: he "I beg your pardon," and she "How ridiculous of me!" Then Adam, just for the sake of saying something to make him important in her eyes, demanded: "What is the name of this thing they're rehearsing? . . . I can't make head or tail of it."

Miss Blake made a warning gesture: "Didn't you know? . . . 'What Rot!' . . . What else could it be?"

"I suppose," said Adam "I might have guessed. . . . And what part do you play in it?"

"What part do I play?" she repeated, "Why, I play Ned Burke."

"Oh!" Adam blurted unthinkingly: "I thought I was to play Ned Burke."

Miss Blake stiffened at once. "I think not," she said almost menacingly.

Adam perceived that he had blundered, and hastened to clear things up. "My mistake," he urged, "I understood that I was wanted for something, and I heard that part mentioned."

"Who mentioned it?" Miss Blake demanded, as though her copyright had been infringed: on hearing the name of Miss Durward, she tossed her rather pretty and very insolent nose, saying: "What does Miss Durward know about it? I like her . . ."

"So do I," Adam broke in, "I like her very much, indeed."

"I wish you'd listen to what I say," Miss Blake

More Ado About Less

retorted. "I was not telling you that I liked her. . . . I was saying I liked her cheek."

Adam, anxious to please every one, was trying to find words of apology for Miss Durward but failed to discover any formula to apply to an imaginary wrong. She went on: "No, I'm sure there could be no question of your playing Ned Burke. You see, it's really a very important part . . . at least it's going to be when Mr. Onsin has written it up for me."

"If he's doing that," Adam said modestly, "certainly it could never have been given to any one else."

"Of course," said Miss Blake, less discordantly, "you might perhaps understudy it."

Adam's pride was up in arms at this: "I never heard of a man understudying a girl."

"Would you call yourself a man?" Miss Blake murmured. And seeing him stretch his frame towards manly pretensions, winged a poisoned shaft: "Then why aren't you at the Front?" And that he might not venture any riposte she rose from her place beside him and walked briskly away.

Adam asked himself why he was not at the Front. Heretofore he had regarded the question as a foolish joke: now it appeared to be an inquiry calling for an answer. . . . Could he be at the front at his age? He was under the impression that he could not. . . . Did he want to be? In the first murderous onslaught of the German hordes on Belgium, yes. He would gladly have rushed to the help of Belgium against Prussia as he had once rushed to the help of his mother against the man who claimed to be his father. But that he should go in the same uniform as the men who had shot down unarmed fellow-creatures in the streets of Dublin was not to be thought of. There flashed up in his memory the badges of Captain de Frece. . . . Could they have been the Scottish Borderers?

In London

No, they were the Scots Fusiliers. . . . He heaved a sigh of relief, and, taking leave for the moment of the Great War, found by a burst of general talk that the rehearsal was at an end.

His heart in his mouth, he approached Mr. Onsin to learn from him what he was wanted to do, and with his mind made up to do what he was told if he could earn his daily bread by it. But the actor merely said: "Not now, not now!" and bustled off. And Mrs. Onsin being nowhere visible, and Miss Blake engaged with one of the elderly young bucks, resolutely ignoring him, Adam crammed his hat down on his head and strode from the theatre with a prayer that the next air-raid might blow that part of Regent Street to the four winds.

Chapter Seven

MR. MACARTHY COMES TO TOWN

OUT of the Grand Theatre stage-door Adam swept, at war with the world that was all a stage. Not for years, he told himself, had he been so humiliated. And indeed he had never been so ; for this was his first experience of the theatre. At the Muses Club and such resorts he had heard stories of the un-businesslike character of this or that actor-manager, but when abstractly considered and their victims mere names, these were the not unpleasant whimsicalities of genius. . . . What man has ever ventured to express sympathy with Dick Sheridan's creditors ? It would be a murder done on mirth to say that their disappointments and chagrins were deeper than the frenzies of harlequinade. . . . But now that the young Adam was himself the fobbed-off party, let the earth tremble at his rage !

Adam was furious all the way up Regent Street : furious and a little afraid ; for if this were the way things were done on the stage how was he to make a living on it ? . . . And if not on the stage, how was he to make a living, blithely as he had written about it to Mr. Macarthy ? Was he prepared to sell papers on the streets of London as he had done in Dublin when all but too young to cry his wares ? He did not see himself as a London newsboy nor how the profits from that calling could defray the cost that now seemed essential to his life. . . . A fresh chill fell at the realisation that he had not even bargained with his hostess as to what the expense of his living should be. He told himself

In London

that it could not be less than thirty shillings or two pounds a week : it was perhaps fortunate that he did not suspect Miss Durward of making a minimum charge of Four Guineas, not including the services of Tomasso or much else.

Pausing at Piccadilly Circus he found his interest in his own life merging in his interest in the life of London . . . the word that ever had been one to conjure with, even as Babylon and Nazareth and Rome . . . names that held their meaning in their sound, unlike Jerusalem and Athens and even perhaps Nineveh, Venice, and Paris, the significance of which had to be explained, however easy to bear in mind. "London" was the roar of the world's hub as it turned on its axle. And Piccadilly Circus, with its off-streets radiating like spokes, seemed the centre of the wheel of life. To be alive on a spring day in this heart of London that was the heart of the world ! The world, men said, was bleeding to death from wounds that gaped across three continents and dyed two oceans red, yet Adam could not conceive a heart beating stronger than that throbbing and singing with energy as he lounged in Piccadilly outside a railway-office, looking north.

And yet . . . and yet . . . What is the use of a world in which one has no place ? Putting to himself this question, Adam passed on moodily into the Quadrant and so up Regent Street to Oxford Circus, where, seeing a 'bus that he recognised as passing Paddington Station, he took it to that corner of London Street with which he already felt himself familiar, and so home to Miss Durward's. She was out, and there was no suggestion from Tomasso of bringing luncheon . . . it was now nearly three and Adam's young tummy yelping for food . . . but he did bring what was almost more welcome, a telegram from Mr. Macarthy : "Hope to arrive Euston to-morrow morning."

Mr. Macarthy Comes to Town

Overjoyed, Adam swung downstairs from his bedroom to Miss Durward's den, where he had remembered the sight of an A.B.C. hanging near the telephone. He was determined to meet his guardian, until he found the train was due at six, which checked his ardour, particularly when he grasped that Euston was a long way to go from Paddington. On the map they looked almost side by side. He had visualised King's Cross, St. Pancras, Euston, Baker Street, Marylebone, and Paddington all within a biscuit throw of one another.

He was still studying the problem when Miss Durward came in, bursting with curiosity as to his morning's experience: "Have you given Belle that kiss yet?" was her first question.

Not knowing how to answer it in what he would call a chivalrous manner, Adam laughed it off, murmuring: "As if she'd let me!"

Miss Durward plumped herself in the chair by her writing-desk: "Look here," she said, "I tell you one thing, young man, if you're going on the stage you'd better put this squeamishness in your pocket. Of course you'll never do anything really immoral so long as you can help it, no lady or gentleman ever would think of such a thing, but if you're too modest to go for what you want, no one is going to give it to you. . . ." As Adam palely held his tongue, she went on: "I can see already that Ossie has turned you down, and it's easy to see why."

"I don't in the least see why!" Adam retorted, not impertinently, but with some little spirit, feeling his resentment against the actor suddenly flare up. "I did everything that I was told."

"You didn't do as I told you," she reminded him. "You didn't kiss his wife, and so she hasn't bothered her head to make him take you on."

Adam drew himself up to his manliest, if inconsiderable height: "What you say is not

In London

absolutely correct," he protested. "But I'm afraid this is a matter I cannot discuss with any one."

Miss Durward bubbled with mirth: "All right, Mr. Joseph, I'll ask Belle if she remembers what happened. . . . The point is that you've lost your chance of a good shop."

"How do you mean shop?" he asked, interested in the new term. And she explained to him that "shop" was professional slang for a theatrical engagement. He tried to draw her off on the side track of her knowledge of the stage, but she was bent on increasing that knowledge at his expense. So in the end she had a working acquaintance with the bald facts of the case, excluding the details of his interludes with Mrs. Onsin and Miss Blake.

Her judgment on the evidence was quite other than he had anticipated. "There's nothing really gone wrong," she declared, "except that every one will say you've no gumption to be put off like that. And good-looking young men so hard to find, too. I'm wondering where Ossie's going to find half the lads he'll want for *What Rot!* . . . Shouldn't be surprised if he had to get girls to play some of the parts. Girls are more like boys than boys themselves since the last year."

Adam was glad to find some point on which they could agree: "He has got a girl to play Ned Burke." he broke in.

"Has he!" Miss Durward ejaculated. "Then I think I know some one who will have something to say to that. . . . Spoiling a beautiful little part. . . . Who on earth is he giving it to?"

For the first time Adam mentioned Miss Blake. "What!" Miss Durward protested, "Woodbine Blake who plays that trollop Margaret in *Much Ado* . . . ? I thought there was something up last night! . . ." She turned impulsively to the telephone: "I'll just ring Belle up and tell her my mind about it. . . . You run away and play, little

Mr. Macarthy Comes to Town

Joseph, or you may hear something that will send you back to Holy Ireland."

Adam accordingly retired to the scandalous company in his bedroom, but sat apart from them, looking out of his window in the direction of Hyde Park until Miss Durward herself ascended to fetch him downstairs.

"I've talked it over with Mrs. Onsin," she declared less flippantly than usual, "and she says she can't understand why you didn't see Mr. Onsin and then come on with him to lunch."

"This is the first I've heard of either of them asking me to lunch," Adam assured her without making any impression.

"I'm only telling you what Belle said," replied Miss Durward, "I'm not necessarily supposing it's true. . . . The point is that she doesn't mean to let Ossie get out of giving you that engagement."

"What engagement?" Adam persisted, feeling a trifle weary of Mr. and Mrs. Onsin.

"Don't be sulky," Miss Durward returned smilingly, "but just thank your stars that you're young and pretty at a moment when being young and pretty counts in a man. It doesn't always, but it's in demand just now because of all those poor kids being killed. What'll happen after the war I don't know. But I suppose the old world will keep on rolling somehow. Ossie's doing his bit, I know. But he's not everybody's money, after all."

Adam was thinking too much about himself to follow closely Miss Durward's appreciation of the great actor's talents. He mastered himself to say with more respect than he felt: "Please tell me what you think I ought to do."

Miss Durward patted him on the head: "That's a good little Joseph. I've thought it all out for you. . . . Sit down and I'll tell you. . . . Go down to the theatre in good time to-night so that you can buy yourself a decent seat in the pit. Then

In London

sit through until the end of her scene in the church with Benedick. After that she has a long wait, so dash round to the stage-door and insist on seeing her. Take no refusal."

"But," Adam objected, "if the old ruffian at the door won't let me in?"

"Don't ask him to let you in," Miss Durward answered, "Just buzz past him as if you were an ordinary member of the company, push through the swing doors, and on your right you'll see the door of the lift. Jump into that and press the button for the second floor. Get out there and you'll find yourself in the passage I brought you through last night, and any one will show you Belle's dressing-room if you can't smell it out for yourself from that strong scent she uses." She smiled at him encouragingly: "Simple enough, isn't it?"

Adam said he supposed it was and wished himself back in Dublin.

For the next hour or two he was preached at and exhorted and instructed and cajoled, all more or less for his good, by his hostess, who gave him at six a chop and against his will a glass of claret, and at seven pushed him off on his journey to fame. Ere half-past he was in the queue outside the Grand pit door, and twenty-five minutes to eight found him occupying a tolerably good seat in the front row.

Partly through the natural sway of youth's pendulum, partly for sound æsthetic reasons, his delight in the art of the stage awakened with greater strength than before at the rise of the curtain. For one thing, he saw the action of the play in better perspective from the pit than from the Royal Box (which in the traditional taste of royalty commanded more of the coulisse than of the stage). And once again Mr. and Mrs. Onsin had become gracious and romantic figures instead of the monstrous dolls they had looked like in their retiring room upstairs. The cut and thrust leading to the

Mr. Macarthy Comes to Town

promise to kill Claudio roused him to enthusiasm, he knew not why, and he danced off to the stage-door just in the prime to make himself agreeable to the fair comedienne. He actually brushed past the stage-door keeper, and although he had never been in an automatic lift before, managed his buttons quite correctly and landed himself in on Miss Bellingham while she was still on fire from the emotion of her great scene. Readers who know the theatre can imagine what followed Adam's entrance in the dressing-room, and for the few nowadays who do not, bald statements of fact will mean nothing. Sufficient to say that both Mrs. Onsin and her hustling husband were sufficiently apologetic for the indifference of their morning reception of him to ease his vanity, and, while Claudio was repeating his poetical prayers at the profile tomb of unburied Hero, Benedick and Beatrice were discussing with Adam the possibility of playing some part in *What Rot!*

At intervals the manager would say: "He could play Ned Burke if I wrote it down, he could play Ned Burke if I wrote it down, but not if we wrote it up." And the constant repetition of the measured phrase buzzed in Adam's ears like a hurdy-gurdy tune, equally with Mrs. Onsin's chant: "He wants to give it to Woodbine Blake, he wants to give it to Woodbine Blake, but I say she won't do." So it continued for a long time until Mrs. Onsin suddenly said: "I wish Stephen Macarthy were here." The word seemed to annoy Mr. Onsin, who asked what that had to do with it.

But on Adam mentioning that he expected Mr. Macarthy in the morning, Mr. Onsin may have changed his mind; for, seizing Adam warmly by the hand, he bade him good-bye with the injunction on no account to be late for rehearsal in the morning, as he would certainly be delighted to hear him read the part of Ned Burke, or indeed any other, though

In London

no doubt he was still a little young and inexperienced, despite his success at the Abbey . . . and so on.

Adam went home too bewildered to be purely gratified. But Miss Durward felicitated him on his rapid recovery after the morning's defeat. So, very tired, he went to bed, and at once to sleep.

Adam awoke with a start, his pulses still drumming the song :—

“ He might play Ned Burke if I wrote it down . . .
(He wants to give it to Woodbine Blake)
He might play Ned Burke if I wrote it down . . .
(He wants to give it to Woodbine Blake)
But not if I write it up . . .
(And I say she won't do).”

It seemed to him that he had not the words of this song quite correctly ; so, wide awake, he repeated them and told himself that Mr. Onsin said : “ If I write it down,” but the antithetical phrase was, “ If we write it up.” Whom did “ We ” cover ? Mrs. Onsin or just the stage-manager . . . or some luckless outcast from Grub Street whom the great man cellared on the premises ? Adam yawned at the thought of this poor ghost working so in the earth, and read on the lucent dial of his wrist-watch that it was four o'clock. He had forgotten to tell Miss Durward that Mr. Macarthy was due at Euston at six. He sprang out of bed, switched on the electric light, made a hasty ablution at the washstand and dressed. Then he scribbled a few explanatory words for Miss Durward and left it on the desk of her sanctum on his way to the hall. At half-past four he was passing St. Mary's Hospital on his way east. Day was breaking on a Praed Street of desolate misery, suddenly broken into by the liveliness of murder as a military ambulance reeled round the corner of Edgware Road.

He passed on to the untravelled land of Marylebone, his nose full of the scent of fish too lately

Mr. Macarthy Comes to Town

fried whiffing through Chapel Street. On past the Great Central Railway Station and Baker Street, to that world-famous home of Madame Tussaud's monstrosities, and Marylebone Church, where (as he had read in a book about London) Hogarth's immortal rake had been married; and so at last across the top of Tottenham Court Road, through the classic portico of the London and North-Western Railway terminus. He knew it well from pictures, and had always taken for granted that he should first see London from that point of view. But in real life what one takes for granted rarely happens.

He had a good half-hour in hand, and as he wandered about the strange old-fashioned station, almost fancied himself back in the Victorian period, the very age of Dickens. The Great Western Railway had given him the impression, with its enormous but finely lined engines, of being a solid achievement of modernity; but Euston's hugeness belonged to the classicism of the last century. The very locomotives, he felt instinctively, were not really so big and powerful as they looked: but resembled that out of date and exploded beast, the British bulldog, which might perhaps hold on to you from sheer inability to let go, but had never been known to serve any useful purpose. Adam wronged the London and North-Western Experiments and Precursors and the rest of them, but that was how they struck him at first sight as he made his way from platform to platform, killing time in the growing, slanting sunlight on that First of April morning. And appropriately enough for that day, he all but missed the train in the end. Yet he found Mr. Macarthy at the door of a taxi, and was hailed by him with the words: "My beloved old man, is that you?"

Adequate reward for early rising.

Chapter Eight

WITH MR. MACARTHY IN LONDON

ADAM trembled with joy as he embraced his guardian and heard him repeat: "My beloved boy, how good it is to find you, not only alive and well, but waiting here to meet me!" He pressed him into the taxi and gave the driver an address in Jermyn Street. Then with a groan from the low gear and a toot they drew away from the train-side and, with a rasp of the clutch, gathered speed out of the station and spun across the Euston Road down Gower Street. Adam was conscious of an almost holy joy ("passing the love of women" was the phrase that suddenly had meaning for him) as he nestled to his guardian's side and felt his arm pressed around him. "I suppose at my age it's absurd to be sentimental . . ." he blurted: "But may I call you 'Daddie'?"

Mr. Macarthy patted his shoulder soothingly: "Well, well, why not? . . . Of course I always think of you as my son . . . though I'm afraid I can't pretend to be your father really."

Adam winced: "I know that just a bit too well," he answered: "It was thinking who my real father was and my real mother that sent me to drown myself." He foundered into tears, which Mr. Macarthy appeared not to notice.

"There, there," said Mr. Macarthy, "there's no doubt that Providence does sometimes seem to find an odd pleasure in serving out new babies to the wrong sort of parents. But you must admit that He made a handsome effort to correct the mistake

With Mr. Macarthy in London

when He sent you Father Innocent. I was perhaps luckier in my father and mother than you, but I wasn't so lucky in my spiritual advisers, and so I wasn't half so good a boy as you've been."

Adam surprisedly dried his eyes and asked whether he had really been a good boy or if his guardian was only saying that to cheer him up. "In my opinion," Mr. Macarthy assured him, "you really have been, all difficulties allowed for, quite a good boy. I don't say that you might not have been a better boy, more industrious, less given to wool-gathering, perhaps even sweeter-tempered. But I frankly confess that you are a better boy than I . . . and I was not the worst lad in Dublin in my young days."

Adam shook his head: "I can't think of you doing anything wrong at all!" he protested, whereat Mr. Macarthy guffawed: "I've never been guilty of murder or rape," he admitted. "Not being a military man, crime does not attract me nor the opportunity for it come my way . . ."

"What exactly is rape?" Adam broke in.

"I thought you knew that," said Mr. Macarthy. "It means taking by sheer brute force from a woman what is devoid of value unless spontaneously offered."

"I thought it was something of the kind," Adam murmured.

Mr. Macarthy continued: "It is not so much a criminal as a lunatic act, like Father Tudor's imbecile brutality to you at Belvedere. There was a time when it was natural, but the progress of civilisation, that almost imperceptible movement, has made it unnatural . . . at all events in the ordinary course of a day's work in peace time. Now, of course, that sort of thing is being done by the heroes of the contending nations all over the globe. Kill your enemy and rape his womenkind. Back to the Golden Age!" His eye caught a

In London

placard in Shaftesbury Avenue, "Your King and Country want you. . . . Do it now!"

Adam protested: "But our soldiers wouldn't do a thing like that?"

"A thing like what?" his guardian asked.

Adam expressed his conviction that Irish soldiers would never be guilty of such infamy; but Mr. Macarthy regretfully advised him that it was on record that their countrymen had committed rape in the service of England, and of France, and of Spain, and of several other countries, not excluding the sacred banner of His Holiness the Pope. Whether they should ever do it in the cause of their native land remained to be seen. "The Irishman claims to be considered as a good soldier," Mr. Macarthy explained, "and the good soldier is the man who cultivates the military virtues of cunning, endurance, and brutality. Chastity, except in so far as it benefits his physical fitness, was never considered a military virtue, unless among the Zulus."

"Then is all war wrong?" Adam asked: "Even in self-defence?"

As they semi-circled past the Shaftesbury memorial Mr. Macarthy answered thus: "If a burglar broke into a man's house and shot his wife or child, I would not blame that man for shooting the burglar then and there. But if he went instead to the burglar's house and shot the burglar's wife or child, I should account him no better than the burglar."

"Oh, how could you!" Adam cried: "Surely the burglar began it?"

"Surely," Mr. Macarthy answered: "The burglar acted without malice? Do you suppose he entered the house for the pleasure of killing the people in it? If he did that he is a criminal lunatic and perhaps his wife and child are better dead. But what about the man who kills them? merely to gratify his own lust for blood. . . . And

With Mr. Macarthy in London

we all have that deep down in our natures with every other potential vice. It is only reason and avoidance of temptation keeps any but the merely cowardly straight. And it seems to me that the lust of cruelty to destroy is even more abominable (if anything can be) than the lust of cruelty to create."

In silence they whirled on into the narrows of Jermyn Street and stopped at a house facing south. "After such a serious conversation so early in the morning," said Mr. Macarthy, "we shall both want breakfast." Adam had just time to take in that the house on the steps of which they stood was old-fashioned, with an old-fashioned door and knocker, when they were admitted by an elderly lady recalling the first member of the aristocracy with whom he had ever been privileged to speak. This gentlewoman, whom Mr. Macarthy addressed as Mrs. Apjohn, was almost just such a piece of ronian respectability as Lady Bland, who, ten years or so ago had offered him a penny for Christ's sake to take a bath. It was queer to have the sensation of Lady Bland scraping and kowtowing, as the Chinese say, in front of you, and hoping that you had an agreeable passage, and what would you have to eat the same as usual, thank you, sir, thank you very much indeed.

"Mrs. Apjohn," said Mr. Macarthy, "has the Castilian manner of the first-class English servant, which she was before I was born, but don't be misled by it. . . . If I woke her out of her after-dinner nap by ringing the bell she would give me notice at once."

"But can she afford to do that sort of thing?" Adam gaped.

"If she couldn't she wouldn't," said Mr. Macarthy, "and since she can, why shouldn't she?"

Adam thought this conduct of Mrs. Apjohn rather profligate, but as she re-entered with a maid

In London

carrying a tray he did not pursue the discussion. He looked out of the window, the middle one of three upon the second floor, and saw a shop or two, a restaurant, and the offices of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. On a table in front of the window lay a popular monthly magazine; turning the leaves, his eye caught a portrait, already familiar to him, of John Galsworthy. From that he glanced to his guardian, busy exchanging compliments with Mrs. Apjohn and fencing with her efforts to ask him what he thought of the war. How like Galsworthy his guardian was as he sat there patiently smiling at her and seeming to say a great deal without speaking. He had not Galsworthy's beauty of feature, but an equal urbanity of expression and a more luminous eye. . . . The difference between Celt and Saxon? . . . But then Galsworthy was a man of Devon and the men of Devon were Celts. . . . Ethnology was the devil of a question. . . . Mr. Macarthy said there was a lot of nonsense in it. Life was too fluid to be pigeon-holed. . . . Mr. Macarthy was also a little like Mæterlinck . . . about the nose? . . . Oh, hang it, everybody was a little bit like everybody else, even Josephine O'Meagher like poor little Caroline Brady. . . . And he was hungry for breakfast.

Mrs. Apjohn's house was less elegantly furnished (to Adam's eye) than Miss Durward's, but she provided even better food. And Adam forgot ethnology and John Galsworthy and love in the more pressing interest of devilled kidneys.

Mr. Macarthy, too, seemed to enjoy his breakfast and there was a long silence before he said: "Before you drown yourself next time, Adam, you might mention to me, or some one else that has time to run and tell me, what's in your mind."

"I'll never drown myself any more," Adam declared with a firmness that was only a trifle weakened by his adding: "I don't think."

With Mr. Macarthy in London

"I shouldn't," Mr. Macarthy said. "There's really nothing in it except discomfort for yourself and anxiety for your friends. . . . But we'll not go into that any more. Tell me what you've been doing since. Have you made your fortune already?"

Adam rose with a slight air of importance from the table and stood with his back against the mantel-piece (a handsome example of his namesake's work, but he did not know it) to make the bigger impression. "No, sir," he answered: "I've not made my fortune. . . . Rome was not built in a day. . . ."

Here Mr. Macarthy asked a trifle disconcertingly: "Are you sure of that?" And Adam feebly returned: "It wasn't, was it?"

"I venture on no statement," Mr. Macarthy replied, "I seek for information."

"Well, anyhow," Adam went on, when he had pulled up his cerebral socks, "I have put my foot on the first rung of the ladder."

"Bravo!" his guardian cried, "but are you really strong enough to carry bricks?"

"Bricks!" Adam echoed. . . . "I've gone on the stage."

Mr. Macarthy whistled very faintly. "Oh! that kind of ladder!" Then his face cleared: "Well, after all you might do worse. . . . Going out with Benson or some one, are you?"

"No," answered Adam proudly: "I've joined Oswald Onsin. . . . At least he's offered me what I'm told is a good part in *What Rot!* . . . They're reviving *What Rot!* you know."

Mr. Macarthy nodded, but was calmer than Adam thought polite. "I didn't know there was more than one good part in *What Rot!*" was all he said.

Adam took up the thread he appeared about to drop: "I forgot that you knew the play. . . . What's it all about?"

"If you have a good part surely you ought to

In London

be able to tell me that," his guardian suggested : " But I suppose you've not rehearsed yet ? "

Adam admitted that he had not so far rehearsed. " After all, I only got to Town the day before yesterday."

" You only got to Town the day before yesterday," his guardian gravely acquiesced : " I am sure your friends in Dublin will be glad to know how well you are doing on the stage, considering you have been so short a time in Town."

Adam stole a glance at Mr. Macarthy, and then returned crestfallen to his chair, murmuring : " I'm a silly ass."

Mr. Macarthy shook his head thoughtfully : " No, no ! Silly, perhaps, but I wouldn't call you a permanent ass, Adam. . . . You're just silly as boys of your age with lively imaginations will be silly. For my part I prefer such silliness to the dull virtue which holds its peace for fear of being laughed at. If you deserve to be scoffed at you take your due in the right spirit. . . . And when all is said and done, I gather that you really have done something to make a good impression on Mr. . . . or was it Mrs. Onsin ? "

After a futile pantomime of philosophic doubt Adam confessed there was ground for supposing that it might have been Mrs. Onsin who was the more impressed by him. Whereupon he seemed to hear Mr. Macarthy mutter : " Good old Belinda ! " Aloud he said : " By the way, Adam, should we happen to meet Mrs. Onsin together, don't call me your daddie in her presence. As you may have noticed, she's a delightful woman, but long connection with the theatre has endued her with a theatrical point of view. If you have to satisfy the Onsin's as to your parentage before they allow you to appear at their theatre you can tell them that your father was a Castle Official."

Adam looked shyly at his guardian : " I know

With Mr. Macarthy in London

you'd be the last one in the world to let me tell a lie. May I say that? "

"Of course you may. I know that for reasons with which I sympathise you do not feel as attached to your father as I hope you will make your own son to you, but I assure you that your father is quite as efficient a public servant and probably no worse enemy to public decency than some of the "Holy Luthers of the preaching North," as Synge called them in an inspired passage, by whom we have been privileged to be ruled. . . . Come, you're not going to cry at your age because your father happens to be a bad hat, or a hat of inferior quality to Father Innocent? "

Adam moodily shook his head: "No, I was only thinking of what you said about my having a son of my own. . . . I wish I had. . . . I've often wished I had even as much as a little brother."

He jumped up and went to the window, where Mr. Macarthy followed him and said gently in his ear: "The world is full of your little brothers. . . . Don't think that because my hair is gray *I'm* too old to be one of them. Please tell me when you think I'm wrong."

Chapter Nine

OF A POST CARD FROM "G. B. S."

To say that Adam was temperamentally patriotic would be to hazard an improbability. His putative father, Macfadden the tailor, had been patriotic in the same sense as he had been religious, and that a very common one ; for he would have been equally pleased to black an Irishman's eye for being a Protestant as a Catholic's for being an Englishman : he would quarrel as readily over questions of faith or politics as over the question of paying for a drink. Adam was conscious of having in himself two distinct beings, one of whom held fiercely that nothing but Ireland mattered, and another doubting spirit that suggested few things mattered less. The English conquest of Ireland, so far as there had been such a thing, was a hateful example of tyrannic abuse of power ; but the individual Englishman appeared to be no more tyrannical than the average Irishman. Father Tudor had an English name, but Adam did not accuse Britannia of begetting him as a flail for young Ireland. Mr. Macarthy had told him that the pedagogic methods of Belvedere would not be tolerated in an English Elementary School.

It was a stumbling-block to Adam that Mr. Macarthy gave him no clear lead in politics. Mr. Macfadden had been a gutter patriot and Mr. O'Toole a stickler for traditional authority : Mr. Macarthy's notions were obviously remote from either ; but to say what they were not was not equivalent to saying what they were. His attitude

66

Of a Post Card from "G. B. S."

to politics was always, so far as Adam could see, negative. He would agree with Mr. O'Meagher that the English government of Ireland was deplorable, but denied the proposition that no government could be worse: he even hinted, for example, that an administration of which Mr. O'Meagher and the Marchesa should be the leading spirits might not satisfy every one. And when Herr Behre, the German socialist, who lived, body and soul, by music, reproached him with criticising the extreme nationalist party instead of joining wholeheartedly in their plans and using his wisdom from within, Mr. Macarthy would shrug his shoulders and say that he was not so content with his ideas that he would let others die to give them life. It is better, he would contend, to correct the palpable follies of mankind than to upset their digestions with a surfeit of ideas. Even within a hundred years an Irishman could not honestly live under an English government, yet Rome made her priests preach obedience to that government: Ireland had always been made the cat's paw of the theocrats, as the theocrats themselves had served as the vilest tools of reactionary despots whose only faith was in witchcraft. One could admire and sympathise with those young priests who had suppressed their antipathy to men of other religions, or no religion at all, in order to make a common front in this holy war for Ireland's liberty. But when it came to the question of the country being governed by even the noblest of priests or their nominees, Mr. Macarthy held that there was risk of plain men who valued their personal freedom finding themselves fallen from the frying-pan into the fire. It were better that men should be shot in batches every day than a live thought smothered because conventional piety blushed at it. Said Mr. Macarthy: "If liberty in Ireland is not to mean intellectual liberty, then God damn Ireland." This was the

In London

fullest expression of opinion that Adam ever heard him utter.

The very hour that Adam, still a boy of twelve, had met the Marchesa della Venasalvatica, unsuspecting in those days of her being his grandmother (and it seemed that she did not suspect it even now) she had sworn him as a recruit for her phalanx of Infant Druids, so called because of their being recruited mainly from the acolytes and choir-boys of the less fashionable Dublin churches. But Mr. Macarthy declined to allow this enlistment to be regarded as effective. He told the Marchesa point blank that his protégé was not for her. Up to the time that he went to school with the Jesuits at Clongowes, Adam had found it something of a grievance that he was not allowed to share the glories of the Infant Druids, but with a maturing intelligence he came to the conclusion that there was nothing in it: besides, he preferred not to be bound even by their Commanding Officer's—the Archdruid's—somewhat flighty discipline. In his early daydreams the possibility of military glory had not been overlooked, any more than the possibility of a martyr's crown; but to be a private soldier seemed as uninviting a career as that of a private saint. If Mr. Macarthy had bid him die for Ireland he might have screwed up his courage to run the risk of it, but Mr. Macarthy refrained from the suggestion that Ireland or any other cause was worth dying for: he seemed very firm on the point that the only reason why a man should die would be the discovery that his life was not worth living; and so far, save in the sulkiness of an offended dignity, a rapidly passing phase, Adam found every moment of his life since he had known Mr. Macarthy and his circle well worth living.

The odd thing was that practically every person everywhere seemed to find life worth living: from Mr. O'Toole to Josephine O'Meagher, not one

Of a Post Card from "G. B. S."

appeared to doubt that it was better to be alive than to be dead : yet for some obscure reason here was practically half the world willing to be dead itself rather than suffer the other half to remain alive. The whole thing was so incomprehensible that it nearly drove you mad when you tried to make sense of it. In Dublin the Great War appeared to be just blatherumskite, as Mr. O'Meagher described the religious vocation : just one more immense adventure of dogs snapping at shadows to lose what they possessed. Yet Mr. Macarthy had seemed at first to have been among those who were for the war rather than against it. He lent it a qualified support and refused to assist in recruiting ; but if young men asked whether they should go or not he bade them go, or said that were he in their place he would do so. It was the apparent change in his view which perturbed Adam as they drove down Shaftesbury Avenue with its recruiting posters. Just as Adam was asking himself for the first time whether he ought not to be at that mysteriously awful Front, Mr. Macarthy seemed to have come to the conclusion that no sane and decent man could have any business there.

From the window of Mr. Macarthy's room in Mrs. Apjohn's house in Jermyn Street, Adam looked across at the building dedicated to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. In front of that office stood the first horse-drawn carriage he had noticed in the London streets : a landau with two showy bays whose outstretched legs told of most careful breeding to an useless end.

"I wonder," said Adam, "that any one would have the cheek to drive up to the head office of the R.S.P.C.A. with bearing reins on their horses."

"You have not been in England long," Mr. Macarthy returned, "or you would find more to wonder at than that."

In London

"The English," Adam said, "are rum people."

"All people are more or less rum," Mr. Macarthy answered. "You may have forgotten, but you told me once that at Belvedere the other boys thought you were mad."

Adam pressed his nose against the window in deep reflection: "Do you think I am perhaps a bit mad, really?"

"Yes," said Mr. Macarthy, with unpleasing readiness, "I think you are."

Adam's face fell: "Do you think I ought to be locked up?"

"No," Mr. Macarthy answered, "I don't think anybody ought to be locked up."

"Not even criminals?" Adam protested.

"State what you mean by a criminal," Mr. Macarthy suggested.

And Adam unhesitatingly answered: "A very bad man."

Mr. Macarthy shook his head: "A very bad man is not necessarily a criminal nor a criminal a very bad man."

"D'ye tell me so?" Adam gaped. And Mr. Macarthy nodded: "Even so," he added. "Try again."

Adam refrained from pursuit of his idea: "It's awfully hard to understand anything completely," he pleaded.

Said Mr. Macarthy: "It is impossible." And here Mrs. Apjohn's maid, entering to clear away the breakfast table, turned their conversation from the philosophical to the practical. It was typical of Adam at this age to take it for granted that his guardian had flown over from Dublin purely to reassure himself as to his condition and see that all went well with him. He was prepared for Mr. Macarthy to show a more curious interest in his achievements than he had so far displayed, and it was with an odd feeling of pathos, as one disowned

Of a Post Card from "G. B. S."

by his father, that he heard him say : " And now you'll want to be off again about your own business, while I shave and dress."

Adam looked at him wistfully : " Rehearsal isn't till eleven," and his eyes invited Mr. Macarthy to glance at the clock, which pointed to nine. The latter smiled, or perhaps he did not smile ; for Mr. Macarthy's expression was commonly that of a male and elderly Mona Lisa. You might suspect him of melancholy, or hilarity, according to your own mood, yet Adam could not remember that he had ever seen him either hilarious or depressed. But then Adam had never seen him in his young days and could not think of him as a young man. To have full coloured hair on his head and no wrinkles on his face would have robbed him of his identity as Adam's Mr. Macarthy. His mind reverted to the subject they had dropped on the entrance of the maid : " Do you think you ever make mistakes about things ? " he queried.

" No," Mr. Macarthy replied, " unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, I never think it. But I make them all the same." Taking a pocket-book from his breast, he produced a post card on which Adam could see a long story in the neatest possible handwriting : " Here is a pretty example of my special branch of imbecility. . . . Foreseeing the certainty that you would want once you reached London, to go on the stage, and thinking I would rather you should appear in good plays than bad, I wrote to Shaw, Galsworthy, and Masefield about you. To Shaw, as a Dublin man, I entered into certain particulars, including a reference to Hollander's as being only a few doors from the house agent's where he was once employed. For Lord knows why, I had got it into my head that he had been a clerk, in extreme youth, at North's. Possibly I had mixed it up with a legend current when I was a lad that Lord Wolseley started life as a clerk in Hodges and

In London

Figgis. Anyhow, there's Shaw's only answer to read for yourself."

He fluttered the card across the room into Adam's hands, and he read: "I cannot accept any recommendations from a man who has accused me of being clerk to a house agent. You might as well call Shakespeare a reporter. I would have you to know that an Irish land agent is a gentleman (not to say a super-snob), and a house agent, of whatever nationality, is a vulgar tradesman. Adam did *not* pass the office to which pilgrims will presently resort on that occasion. Kindly conduct him, at the first opportunity, down Molesworth Street. At No. 15, on the north side, next the Masonic Hall, the office still exists of Uniacke Townshend, LAND agent; and if Adam enters and asks: 'Is this a house agent's?' he will be struck dead. . . . —G. B. S."

Adam fingered the card with an air of reverential disappointment: "I don't see what this has to do with me," he said, "Does it mean Mr. Shaw won't do anything for me?"

"On the contrary," Mr. Macarthy answered, "it means that his interest is aroused."

Adam read it again with vague hopes that grew vaguer with each sentence: "It doesn't seem to promise much," he said.

"It promises nothing," his guardian pointed out. "The usual custom in the theatrical world is to promise everything and perform nothing . . . nothing worth performing. . . . The meaning of that post card is that if you go to Shaw he will know who you are and he will listen to you or more likely talk to you about my foolishness, which is precisely the sin I am confessing to you as a warning for your future."

Adam pursed his lips: "I don't see where the foolishness came in. Any one might make a mistake like that."

Of a Post Card from "G. B. S."

"No," said Mr. Macarthy, "any one might not unless he were a vain ass too anxious to be clever to escape being silly." He laid his hand on Adam's shoulder and said laughingly, "I really don't know whether my stupidity has done you any harm. . . . I think not . . . but I've damned myself in my own eyes by that idiotic mistake."

Adam was stubborn: "I don't see that a mistake like that matters a bit. . . . You wouldn't tell me that Mr. Shaw is seriously annoyed."

Mr. Macarthy laughed, "Shaw is pulling my leg." His face hardened: "But I am seriously annoyed with myself, for it is just that form of ineptitude in mistaking one's impressions for facts which holds civilisation back more firmly than the most resolute Conservatism. The Great War, as children call it, as if there could be anything great about war, was not made by villains but by blunderers. Man's worst enemy is his own ineptitude." He broke off: "And now you must say good-bye until . . . later on." And so Adam reluctantly took his departure, wishing it were a play by Shaw in which he was to make his first appearance, and not Mr. Oswald Onsin's masterpiece.

Chapter Ten

ADAM STOOPS TO CONQUER

As Adam turned in to Regent Street from Mr. Macarthy's lodgings in Jermyn Street, and approached that in every sense imposing pile, the Grand Theatre, he sincerely wished that it was the least approved of Shaw, or Galsworthy, or Masefield's plays in which he was to make his bow to the public rather than "Mr. Onsin's masterpiece, *What Rot!*" as the puffs called it. He reflected on this title, so ominous of its content. And he was not sure after all whether he was to be permitted the honour of appearing in this work of art. . . . Supposing that he failed to please Mr. or Mrs. Onsin when it came to the reading of whatever part it might be in their minds to allot to him, Ned Burke or something less (for his chastened vanity surrendered the possibility of its being anything more), then his vaunted career on the stage would end as it had begun. His heart sank ever lower as he drew nearer the stage-door. He wished he had made a stouter effort yesterday to discover what the play really was about . . . if it might be said to be about anything. All he gathered was that Mr. Onsin was called Lord Algy Taplow and Miss Belinda Bellingham (Mrs. Oswald Onsin) called Lady Lucina Something, and both were supposed to be younger than they looked.

At the pit entrance beside the stage-door, bill-posters were busy with double crown placards. . . . He saw the world-famous words: "What Rot!" go up in capitals that stared out of countenance all

Adam Stoops to Conquer

passers by. Beneath, on another strip, appeared the heads, well-spaced, of a man and a woman, developing at once into the familiar. The lady's head had a tall hat balanced on it, brilliantly black on her golden hair, the honest gentleman was hatless. Another strip showed that she was wearing pyjamas, possibly his, and he a nightdress, no less possibly hers, a third strip confirmed one's first suspicion that she fled and he pursued her; for feet were flung across the ingenious composition: hers in red sandals, his in black pumps. Beneath all flared the challenge: "Who Can Stop It?" Stop what? Adam asked himself, and the placard answered: "What Rot!" As he regarded this poster a little shamefacedly, wondering where he had seen it first, he little dreamed that once upon a time his putative father, the great Malachy Macfadden had gazed long and lovingly upon it, the night he had gone over to the majority. The young gentleman and young lady depicted in that poster were not wildly fanciful likenesses of Miss Belinda Bellingham and her husband in the days when they were newly married and Adam's sole glimpse of life above the starvation line was Lady Bland's bathroom. That infancy seemed to him as remote now as did the days of their wooing to Mr. and Mrs. Onsin. . . .

Adam's thoughts were scattered by a majestic trumpeting, and the portentous limousine which he had seen once before that day dashed past him and deposited Mrs. Onsin at the door of her husband's theatre. . . . Adam recalled his forgotten intention of asking first Miss Durward and afterwards Mr. Macarthy how Mrs. Onsin came to have this car placed at her disposal by the government. . . . Was it to enable her perhaps to visit the military hospitals and cheer the wounded with her buoyancy, eked out by art?

It chanced that his questioning was resolved by

In London

the accidental falling of Miss Woodbine Blake's voice on his ear. She was walking behind him, unconscious of his proximity as she emptied her mind into that of the elderly youth who had already roused Adam's jealousy. "No," she was saying, "it's not a Rolls Royce, it's a fifty horse-power, six cylinder Wolseley; they're not common."

"Tut, I should think not," said the elderly youth, "I don't suppose there's another member of the profession in London, not a lady, anyhow, that has one."

"Oh, she hasn't one," Miss Blake returned, "it's a War Office car lent her by Lord Bulwark."

"Lord Bulwark?" the actor echoed, "I thought he was in France commanding an Army Corps?"

Miss Blake laughed. "He may be commanding an Army Corps in France all right, but that wouldn't prevent him spending most of his time in London, or at any rate where Mrs. Onsin is."

The actor looked at her with googly eyes. "You don't mean to say!" he ejaculated.

"I don't mean to say anything," Miss Blake said sweetly, "I was only answering your question."

Something in this scrap of talk prickled Adam with a delightful despair: he saw life as at once hopeless and deliciously comic: he visualised the portly form of Lord Bulwark whirled at immense cost in aeroplanes between England and France that he might simultaneously fight the Germans and flirt with Mrs. Oswald Onsin. . . . And Mr. Oswald Onsin, what of him? Was he really proud of his wife's connection with the famous if not notably successful general, or were his allusions to the matter to be taken in an ironical spirit? . . . What did it matter to him what Mr. and Mrs. Onsin thought about each other, the question was if he was to be given an opening on the stage by them. Gloomy about his prospects, Adam entered

Adam Stoops to Conquer

the theatre. He half thought the door-keeper might question him, but he sniffed and said nothing.

Once inside Adam fought down his despair and concentrated his mind on all that concerned *What Rot!* He pricked his ears when Mr. Onsin said: "We will take the play from the beginning and go right through as far as we can," this gave him the desired sequence of events which would enable him to gather the meaning of the play. The first act was laid in the Grand Hotel at Paris where Lady Lucina Lovelace arrives breathless with her young and romantic first cousin, Neddie Burke, an Eton boy. It appears that she had been married that morning to Lord Algy Taplow at St. George's, Hanover Square, but hearing at the wedding breakfast that he had once been kissed by the Duchess of Quicksands, she determines never to see him more, and with Master Burke's assistance, flees from London to Paris. There Lord Algy arrives in pursuit of her, and he had just persuaded her that there was nothing in the story of the Duchess of Quicksands, when enter the Princesse des A'gues-mortes, who, not seeing her, embraces him, and Lady Lucina flees again to spend Act two in Cairo where parallel incidents arise as they do in Act three at Melbourne and in Act four at New York; but all ends happily in Act five at the Ritz Hotel, London, the curtain apparently coming down on the realisation of the poster which had found more favour in the eyes of Adam's supposititious father, than his own. It appeared that the full title of the play was *What Rot! or The Pursuit of the Well-Beloved*. Some of the business of the last act was incomprehensible to Adam at rehearsal, but then the last act would not have been reached but for Mr. Onsin's privilege of saying: "And so on, and so on, and so on," instead of his speeches. As he who had more to say than all the others put together

In London

pronounced so little of it, this was a great economy of time.

Miss Blake read the part of Ned Burke and Adam was constrained to admit that she read it very charmingly, if in a manner which he found it impossible to believe that an Eton boy would have done it . . . but then he had never met an Eton boy, so far as he knew, and indeed knew nothing of any schoolboys outside Belvedere and Clongowes, and although Belvedere boys have something in common with Eton boys they have not very much more than an odd collar and a shell jacket. As he watched her, Adam had enough sense of the theatre to realise that Miss Blake would be more successful with the British public than he could hope to be in such a part. So his heart sank lower still as he sat in the front row of the stalls, feeling shy of loitering too near the stage until he was called for. . . . And then quite suddenly, with an electrical thrill, Mr. Onsin actually did call for him.

Adam could scarcely believe his ears when at the end of the first act Mr. Onsin, in reply to a whispered request from Miss Blake, said rather loudly : "Certainly, my dear, you can go home for to-day if you don't feel well, I'll ask Mr. What-you-may-call-him to read the part," and Adam was forced by the vain effort to find Mr. What-you-may-call-him in the theatre, to realise that it was he. . . . In a moment he had escalated the stage and was holding out his hand for the part.

As he read it, after the first stumbling effort to give the lines no less verve than Miss Blake had given, he was conscious of two things : first, that he was succeeding to his own satisfaction, and secondly that not only Mrs. Onsin but Mr. Onsin was listening with unconcealed interest. By the end of the second act he found himself ready to believe that after all he might play the part in London. He was thinking this, with his eyes on the gloom of the dress circle,

Adam Stoops to Conquer

into which he was trying to pitch his voice that it might ring through the house, when he was aware of a door opening at the back of it and the figure of a man in a tall hat momentarily opaque against the daylight, then the door closed and the man was invisible, though he could be heard shuffling down into a front seat with the manifest intention of watching the rehearsal. Adam wondered if Mr. Onsin had noticed his presence and if he approved of it. Perhaps he was an influential member of the Press or could he be? . . . No, there being a war on, Lord Bulwark would not be sitting in the dress circle of the Grand Theatre, London, during fighting hours with a tall hat on his head. . . . At least, Adam supposed not. . . . Whoever he might be, Adam hoped he should find an opportunity of hearing his candid opinion of his impersonation of Ned Burke in *What Rot!* he conceived that it would be favourable.

From midday until one that day was of the pleasantest hours in Adam's life, for it thrilled with unforeseen success, the edge of which was sharpened rather than dulled by the wonderment whether it was not all a dream. When at half-past one Mr. Onsin dismissed the company for lunch, he asked himself if now he would awake to find there was nothing in it. But the dream, if dream it was, went on; for Mr. Onsin, saying to him politely: "Where do you lunch?" the fair Belinda broke in: "With us, of course," and her lord and master with unwonted urbanity declared the idea not a bad one. So Adam in triumph, with Mrs. Onsin on his right and Mr. Onsin on his left, swept out through the stage-door, across, as it were, the vanquished form of the door-keeper, out of Regent Street and into the Haymarket, and so entered a restaurant where everybody seemed to welcome Mr. and Mrs. Onsin, and Mr. and Mrs. Onsin graciously acknowledged the homage of a few.

In London

As Adam sat there, with Mr. and Mrs. Onsin alternately offering him the rarest dishes mentioned in the menu . . . and the war had not yet reached that stage when a mutton cutlet was worth its weight in gold . . . he felt that he had indeed arrived, and might be justified in sending his photograph to the *Evening Telegraph* with the intimation that he might now be described as a leading London actor. It was therefore a little disappointing when Mr. Onsin opened the professional side of their conversation by inquiring whether he had ever suffered from adenoids, and Mrs. Onsin instead of protesting said: "That's just what struck me."

On the other hand they were equally surprised when Adam with his mouth full of soup, for he was taken aback and careless of his manners, being much puzzled, and showing it in his countenance, repeated the word adenoids and added: "D'ye mean boils?"

Mr. and Mrs. Onsin did not mean boils, they were clear on that point; but they were not sufficiently enlightened about the nature of adenoids to be able to explain that distressing complaint to Adam, though Mr. Onsin illustrated the best-known symptoms by a semi-ventriloquial conversation between a lover and his lass, both suffering from the same. This was taking a Rabelaisian turn which Adam feared must, if persevered in, shock Mrs. Onsin's feelings, and he was kept busy in showing his appreciation of Mr. Onsin's jokes and at the same time affecting not to understand them, when his eye was caught by a figure in a tall hat and frock coat walking up the restaurant towards them. . . . Where had he seen that figure before? . . . Entering the dress circle during rehearsal. . . . And where before? . . . Never in a tall hat and a frock coat. . . . "Why!" cried Mrs. Onsin, "here's Stephen Macarthy."

It is a fact that Adam had been so mightily

Adam Stoops to Conquer

pleased with his own greatness during the past couple of hours that he had forgotten his guardian altogether, forgotten even to anticipate the pleasure of bragging to him of his success. Although he had first heard the names of Mr. and Mrs. Onsin and their Grand Theatre and their equally grand success, "What Rot!" in the programme of that production that hung between the crucifix and the portrait of Erasmus over the mantelpiece in Mr. Macarthy's bedroom at Dublin, he could not associate the idea of Mr. Onsin or Mrs. Onsin or *What Rot!* with Mr. Macarthy: they seemed to him to belong to different worlds, as different as the worlds that contained the Marchesa della Venasalvatica and Mr. Byron O'Toole. . . . Though indeed these two happened to be, or appeared to be, mother and son. . . . All that belonged to a past so fantastical as to be no longer credible, but the Mr. Macarthy who lifted his hat to shake hands with Mrs. Onsin was as real as the Mr. Macarthy who lifted it to Barbara Burns, now Mrs. Leaper-Carahar. . . . And here he asked himself what Barbara would say when she heard of his success, as sooner or later she must, as a London actor.

Then Mr. Onsin said an astonishing thing as he rose good-humouredly also to take Mr. Macarthy's hand: "You're late, old chap, we'd given you up."

Mrs. Onsin raised her eyebrows: "Why didn't you tell me Stephen was coming?" Mr. Onsin murmured that she forgot everything.

Mrs. Onsin, beaming on Stephen, said there were things no woman could forget; and Adam wondered whether she meant more by this than was sufficient to satisfy the ear. Anyhow, Mr. Macarthy appeared to take his being expected or not expected equally as a matter of course, and sat down by Mrs. Onsin as easily as if he had sat by her all his life. Of Adam, who sat opposite him at the square table, he took

In London

no fresh notice and Adam understood that the less he said for the present the better.

"I wish you'd been to the theatre this morning," Mrs. Onsin said. "We're rehearsing 'What Rot!' so you . . ."

Mr. Onsin casting a glance behind him as though to warn her to beware of eavesdroppers, broke in : "He was there, my dear."

Mrs. Onsin dropped her hand on Mr. Macarthy's. "Stephen, be sweet," she besought him, "tell me I'm going to do it better than ever."

"You always do everything better than ever, as you will hardly need to be told," said Mr. Macarthy.

Mrs. Onsin fell eagerly upon a cutlet, declaring : "That's very nicely put, Stephen," and Adam wondered whether she really thought so ; for it seemed to him that it might mean anything. There was silence as Mr. Onsin moodily chewed beefsteak.

At last he said, with the slightest possible inclination of his elbow in Adam's direction : "And what do you think of What-you-call-him ?"

To this question Mr. Macarthy returned another : "When does the Spring tour start ?"

"Eastbourne, Easter Saturday," the manager said.

"Have you your full company ?"

"More or less," said the manager, "except Ned Burke. Ned Burke is always the difficulty."

"And it's such a beautiful part," Mrs Onsin interpolated, "it seems a pity to spoil it by putting a fat man of fifty to play it, and of course it's still worse to have it played by a woman."

"I'd rather see it played by a woman than by a fat man of fifty," Mr. Macarthy said ; "in that my taste is popular. At Eastbourne I think you will be quite safe rather than that, in trusting it to What-you-call-him."

Mrs. Onsin said : "I really thought this morning he was quite good enough to play it in town."

Adam Stoops to Conquer

Mr. Onsin shook his head indulgently and seemed to appeal to Mr. Macarthy, who replied: "I dare say he is, but I don't consider that at the present moment town would be good for him; he has too much to learn that can't be learned in London, but the rough and tumble of a tour will begin to teach him something."

Mr. Onsin seemed offended by the phrase "rough and tumble." "It's quite a first-class tour," he said. "Eastbourne is not a bad booking for Easter Week."

"Where do you go afterwards?" Mr. Macarthy asked.

Mr. Onsin gave his face the expression of one who recalls with difficulty a matter important in itself but paling into insignificance in the light of his own importance. "I send them to Portsmouth and . . . places like that."

"What places are like Portsmouth?" Mr. Macarthy inquired. "Do you mean Plymouth?"

After some hesitation Mr. Onsin confessed that he did not mean Plymouth, he meant Ramsgate and Folkestone; but was not sure about Folkestone on account of the war. He repeated the assertion that it was a first-class tour, but Adam saw by his guardian's countenance that it was nothing of the kind.

"From my point of view," said Mr. Macarthy, "it is immaterial whether it is a first-class tour, but it is essential that it should be some class. Tolerable theatres or halls and possibly decent audiences."

Mr. Onsin was ironical. "Did you think it was a fit-up tour?" he said point blank.

And equally point blank Mr. Macarthy answered he thought it quite possible, but would believe Mr. Onsin's assurance that it was not if he could offer Adam a salary of five pounds a week.

Whereupon Mr. Onsin smiled his famous smile

In London

and called for another bottle of wine. "To prove to you that it's a first-class tour, old man, we'll make it guineas," said he.

And in Mr. Onsin's den at the Grand Theatre that very afternoon a contract was drawn up and duly signed and stamped, by which Oswald Onsin, Esquire, of the one part, and Adam Quinn, Esquire of the other, agreed that the latter should perform the part of Ned Burke, or such other part as might be allotted to him in the comedy known as "What Rot!" or such other play as might be performed during that period of twelve weeks from the date of signing this agreement, and that the former should pay the latter in consideration of this a sum of five guineas weekly for the said period.

As Mr. Macarthy and his young charge left the theatre together, Stephen said to him casually: "Well, Mr. Quinn, you're an uncommonly lucky young man. As a reward for drowning yourself you are put into a fair way of making your fortune."

Adam looked up at his guardian, his eyes overflowing with triumph. "D'ye think I'm going to make my fortune?" he asked.

Mr. Macarthy smiled down on him kindly: "How on earth should I know?" he said, "but it's clear to me that Mr. Onsin, who is as shrewd a business man as any on the stage, thinks that you're capable of making a fortune for some one."

"I'd like to think," said Adam, "that I was going to be a success."

"And I," said Mr. Macarthy, "would like to think that you were going to deserve it."

Chapter Eleven

ADAM GOES ON TOUR

FOR some weeks in the spring of that year there was no war on for Adam. True, everywhere he went most men were in khaki, temporary soldiers, terribly many for the little time that remained of their lives ; but so far as Adam was concerned they might have been made of tin : they meant no more to him than to the wire-pullers down in Whitehall who flung them to destruction on this or that sector on the endless line of front, according to the wild-cat inspiration of the moment. In the defence of liberty the youth of Britain had all been enslaved, and a considerable percentage were in the course of being massacred. Adam was aware of this and puzzled by it, but supposed that Britons being born free were taking their pleasure in this manner. Their capital, despite the darkness of the streets at night, was alight with the hectic fury of a fair where everything without exception could be bought and sold. All he knew was that his talents were going to provide him with sufficient income that even at his tender age he could hope to enjoy much of the fun of the fair.

But his head was not in any way turned : he realised that other men's misfortunes had given him his opportunity and he set himself to deserve his good luck. And his prospective five pounds a week was not to be paid him for nothing. If Adam did not spend many hours rehearsing, he passed the greater part of the day waiting to be rehearsed. Mr. Onsin called his provincial company at the

In London

same hour as his London one, laying down the rule that the lesser actors should model themselves on their London betters, and make the provincial performance as exact a replica of the Grand production as their power of mimicry allowed. Happily, as the part of Ned Burke was now definitely given to Miss Blake for the London show, Adam was excused from the ignominy of directly copying her.

He was also fortunate in the fact that Lord Algy Taplow in the provincial cast was played by a young-looking man of forty or so, who, in the days of his histrionic youth, had made a success as Ned Burke in the original production. Since then he had been permanently in Mr. Onsin's employ, as his understudy, until the shortage of actors rising from the war made it necessary to send him out on tour in a part wherein Adam preferred him to the original. But Mr. Macarthy explained that he was not really better than Mr. Onsin, his merit lying in the fact that to the business learned from his master he added the advantage of a more sympathetic personality. . . . A sympathetic personality was in Mr. Macarthy's opinion the qualification most valuable to an actor who wooed success in the English theatre. Anything on the stage that suggested the working of a brain, unless it were the brain of the more innocent sort of detective, roused the aversion of a London audience ; but an actor with a pleasant smile and manner and not too harsh a voice could do what he liked with them in the matter of plays, or if exceptionally ingratiating, even the matter of morals, always provided that his immorality was expressed in physical and not in intellectual terms. To hoodwink a husband and kiss his wife, covering the act with a laughing lie, was a delightfully spirited thing for a hero to do ; but to tell him that you considered yourself at liberty to kiss his wife if she desired it was an

86

Adam Goes on Tour

impropriety not to be tolerated in a respectable playhouse. It was, after all, the basic teaching of the Christian churches that it did not greatly matter what you did so long as you admitted that you were doing wrong.

But Adam troubled himself not at all about morals during those delightful April days (in point of fact rather cold and rainy), when on the eve of his seventeenth birthday he found himself rehearsing a real part in a real if uncommonly silly play with every prospect of a personal success. It seemed to him a good omen that the day chosen for their opening performances at Eastbourne, one in the afternoon and one at night, actually should be his seventeenth birthday. He confided this information to Mr. Arthur Sackville, the name by which the leading member of the company was known to him, and Mr. Sackville showed a proper interest. Looking at Adam with kind eyes, he said: "You are a lucky little chap, you know; I was over thirty before they thought me good enough to play a part like that; but of course," he added, "that was a question of creating it in London, and you mustn't think me vain if I say that it is one thing to play a part in an already successful piece in the provinces, and another thing to create a rôle that is only just words on paper until you have made what you can of it."

Adam said that he would never have the courage to play such a big part in an original production. He did not mean this, and Mr. Sackville knew perfectly well that he did not mean it, but appreciated the implicit deference. "If you play the part," said he, "as well as you rehearse it, I have very little doubt that with your influence you will be creating big parts in London before long, or at any rate at an age when it would have been impossible for me to get even a minor London engagement."

In London

"Is it so difficult to get a London engagement?" Adam asked.

"Before the war," said Mr. Sackville, "for a man making his daily bread and with no social influence it was practically impossible. But the war, with its drain on the life-blood of the younger people, has changed all that for so long as it lasts." He lowered his voice: "The war is a blessing to an enormous number of actors who have not been employed for years."

"And when the war comes to an end?" Adam asked. Mr. Sackville shook his head sadly: "I dare not think of it," he murmured.

Adam almost dropped his voice to a startled whisper. "You don't mean to say you want the war to go on?"

"God forbid!" the other exclaimed, "not for my own sake anyhow, but it seems to me as a middle-aged man that I'd rather have had my life put out with a bullet at your age than live to die of starvation in my old age."

Adam was horrified so far as it was possible for him to lose countenance in his happy mood. "Surely that won't happen to many?" he said.

Mr. Sackville's fine and pleasant face fell into dreary curves as he answered: "It will happen to half a dozen of our make-believe young sparks in this theatre within three years of the firing of the last shot."

Adam was saddened by what Mr. Sackville said, but gladdened by the kindly way he said it; for he felt that in this modest gentleman whose artistry if not brilliant, was sincere, he would have a worthy friend. Mr. Macarthy agreed with him.

Of his guardian in those days of his new life he did not see a great deal, yet he saw more than some youths would have expected. He was frequently at the theatre during rehearsal time, and, although he was never heard to comment upon what he

Adam Goes on Tour

saw, from time to time alterations were made by Mr. Onsin which Adam guessed were suggested by Mr. Macarthy. One night he dined at Norfolk Square with his young friend and Miss Durward, and more than once she and Adam dined at a public restaurant with him, going to a theatre or music hall afterwards. So Adam in less than a month's time, which was all that he had, before starting on tour, made some acquaintance with the light side of London. Whether Miss Durward accompanied him or not, he spent every other evening with Mr. Macarthy; his days, as has been said, were given to Mr. Onsin, who wasted a great deal of them. Once during that month there was a real air-raïd, but Adam, asleep in bed when it commenced, knew nothing about it until next day; for he slept the sleep of contented youth.

In her good-humoured way Miss Durward seemed to regard it as a grievance that Mr. Macarthy did not lodge at Norfolk Square. It is true that she had not a room available, but she threw out fairly strong hints that if he would not be satisfied with an extra bed in Adam's room, she was prepared to put the bed up in her own den next the bathroom. But Mr. Macarthy declared that it would be an infamy to cause her inconvenience, and stayed on at Mr. Apjohn's. Adam did not see how it could be an infamy to do for Miss Durward what she wanted, but Mr. Macarthy insisted that she did not really want it. Adam even went so far as to say that he suspected Miss Durward of being in love with Mr. Macarthy, and Mr. Macarthy declared that the facts were to the contrary. This puzzled Adam so much that he did not farther pursue the matter. Anyhow, the idea of Miss Durward or any woman being in love with his guardian always appeared to him in the light of a joke. Younger and prettier ladies than Miss Durward and Mrs. Onsin had affected to be interested in that humorous old bachelor. . . .

In London

Was Mr. Macarthy an old bachelor? . . . It was odd to think how little he knew about Mr. Macarthy. Often it was on his lips to ask him why he had never married, but somehow, widely as his questions ranged, they never ranged so far as that. Mr. Macarthy, ready as he was to encourage questions on almost every subject, turned aside those which tended towards gossip; even of Adam's scandalous parents, whom it would be reasonable to suppose he held in abhorrence, he answered no questions in scandalous terms: for him Adam's mother was a woman to be pitied if avoided, and his father a man to be laughed at rather than damned, except, indeed, as example.

But if Adam thought little of Mr. Macarthy's love-affairs, he devoted some attention to his own. London in war time hummed with the love affairs of young and old, and the Grand Theatre stood in a situation too near the centre of things for an ardent young man to be unconscious of the sea of sexuality in storm around him. It seemed to him that every woman he met that spring in London might be won by a passionate wooer, and in theory he was such a one, but in practice quite otherwise. Once already he had known love in what he believed to be its entirety. That was with Caroline Brady, whose tombstone in Glasnevin, placed over her by Mr. Macarthy, pleaded for remembrance as his friend. Once or twice that month when temptation conjured up some facile successor, poor Caroline's tombstone oddly barred the way. He knew without being told that it was to this end his guardian had sought to perpetuate the unlucky child's memory. Thanks to the man she had vaguely worshipped from afar, her inglorious existence had become valuable even in its grave. He was too young to be successful in his effort to analyse his motive for being faithful to her ghost. He visualised no meeting beyond the grave, nor even desired it. So far as he voluntarily

90

Adam Goes on Tour

sentimentalised, his thought conjured up Josephine O'Meagher sorry for herself being a nun. He still thought of a nun as one severed utterly from life, as Curtius when he plunged into the gaping fissure that threatened Rome.

His fancy wantoned with the Woodbine Blakes of his new world, this or that Thais sat by him in his dreams. Withal when the Eastbourne train steamed out of Victoria, with the *What Rot!* touring company as its least warlike freight, he left London as innocent as he had entered it; faithful in spirit to Josephine O'Meagher, in sentiment to Barbara Carahar, and in fact to Caroline Brady.

It is true that at Victoria Station he was disappointed to find that the ladies of the company travelled by themselves and so he was to miss the chance of a long desired *tête-à-tête* with beautiful Drusilla Dartmouth, who played Lady Lucina on tour. As she glided down the platform to the train, ushered thither by two red-tabbed officers of princely bearing, Adam thought her as exquisite as her inspiring name. Even when, later on, he learned from Mr. Sackville that she was known to her intimates as Peggie Simpson of Paisley, he was steadfast to his opinion that she was rather nice-looking. . . . Meanwhile it was a sufficiently happy position for a lad on the eve of his seventeenth birthday (and the more so when he remembered his seventh, spent in the abomination of squalor) to find himself travelling as the intimate friend of the leading actor of a troupe of which he himself was not the least important member.

Mr. Macarthy had not come to the train to say good-bye to him, warning Adam that it were best not to emphasise his extreme youthfulness. "The infant prodigy has no place in art," he explained. "Thanks more than anything else to your youth you've got an opening on the stage that may well

In London

lead to success, but remember that youth is merely a qualification and not a quality." He added: "At best it remains a qualification for a devilish short time." And again he said: "I think you may be going to have a real success in *What Rot!* but that is not to say that I think you will ever have a success in anything else."

Adam looked up at him, troubled. "D'you mean that you don't think me as good as the others think me?"

"I think you quite good in *What Rot!* Mr. Macarthy answered, "but *What Rot!* is . . ." he broke off: "I gave it that name myself," and said no more.

Chapter Twelve

SUCCESS

ON the platform of Victoria Station Adam had smoked a cigarette. It was his duty in the character of Ned Burke to do so, and he was striving to acquire the habit of doing it naturally. Nevertheless his cigarette was usually out, and he knew it was not good form to relight it, so he spent a good deal of time chewing the end and upsetting his digestion with particles of tobacco. To make a long story short, he never learned how really to smoke but he did gain from Mr. Sackville the more important professional knowledge of how to hold a cigarette naturally in the mouth without distorting it. Mr. Sackville had arranged with his young friend to share his rooms on tour, so Adam had every opportunity of modelling himself on a player who combined all the studied graces that mark the perfect gentleman of the theatre without losing the simplicity of heart which keeps a man a gentleman in reality. Nevertheless he refused a second cigarette which Mr. Sackville offered him in the train when he threw the mangled remains of the first out of the window.

Mr. Sackville nodded indulgently as he returned his cigarette-case to his pocket. "You're quite right," he murmured. "Bad habit, spoils the voice. I commenced when I was too young to know better. There was no one to warn me. And now I find it hard to leave off. . . . It's better than drinking. I've never done that."

"I wonder what you do do?" growled the low

In London

comedian of the company, a gentleman of singularly unattractive mien. . . . "I've never known you even womanise, and I don't suppose . . . at least I've never heard . . ." he broke off with a leer which roused an echoing chuckle from one or two of the elderly young bucks. . . . Adam did not understand why. Mr. Sackville, to his disappointment, did not crush the low comedian, but turning a little pink, looked out of the window, and presently took up a novel, which he read or appeared to read for the rest of the journey. Adam, sitting opposite to him, was content to admire the beauties of Surrey and Sussex, seen to-day for the first time.

And while he gazed at these agreeable shires, whose beauties, springing to fresh life in the April sunlight, could not be hidden even by the clouds of smoke from the locomotive or the ingenuity for circumventing the attractions of nature displayed by the engineer of the line, he saw also the change that had come over his life in one short month. This was the third Thursday in April. . . . The third Thursday of March he had been in Dublin with never a thought of leaving it, not knowing how he could leave it if he should ever want to. He had sometimes thought of going on the stage, but never imagined that he should do so through any door but that of the Abbey Theatre. The idea of going to England and joining a theatrical company there had seemed fantastic. Above all, that he should be playing a part in the derided and despised *What Rot!* which Mr. Macarthy agreed with every one in Dublin in regarding as the acme of British silliness, was really too incredible.

At their lodgings that evening he asked Mr. Sackville to tell him in confidence what he thought of the play in which they were about to appear.

Mr. Sackville's fine face, the resemblance of which to Forbes Robertson's had led him from a secure

but ill-paid berth in an Insurance Office to one almost as secure and incomparably more remunerative upon the stage, betrayed a painful doubt in Mr. Sackville's mind. "I cannot say that I've ever thought about it," said he. "To me it is simply a piece in which I am engaged to appear."

"But do you think it a good piece?" Adam urged.

"That is a very difficult question," Mr. Sackville protested. "I remember to have read such varying notices."

"But I mean what you yourself think of it," Adam insisted.

The trouble on Mr. Sackville's face deepened and then vanished in a smile. "I've never seen it from the front," said he.

"I've never seen it at all," Adam blurted, "but I think it rubbish."

Mr. Sackville was clearly pained. "Come, come, that's too severe," he said. "Of course it's not to be compared with *Romeo and Juliet* or *The Lady of Lyons* or any other standard play. It belongs to the second rank like *East Lynne* and *Sweet Lavender*, only, of course, it's quite different, being so up-to-date. I'm not sure if I make myself clear?"

Adam said it was quite clear but could not make up his mind whether his friend thought *What Rot!* a good play or not. "What is *East Lynne*?" he asked.

"A very beautiful play of a kind not at the moment very fashionable," Mr. Sackville said.

"What's it about?" Adam asked.

"About a lady who is an earl's daughter but marries a solicitor and is seduced by a baronet, and comes back as a governess to find her only child dying without recognising her because she wears spectacles to disguise herself from her husband," Mr. Sackville said, not without emotion.

In London

"You see, quite a simple story, but touching on the stage."

"Is it?" said Adam. "It sounds to me worse than *What Rot!*"

"I may have described it badly," said Mr. Sackville, "and no doubt to a young blood like yourself it will seem old-fashioned, but it's the most successful play of its kind ever written, I assure you."

"I know a lady," said Adam, "who was the daughter of a nobleman, and was seduced by a baronet, and wears spectacles," he paused.

"Do you?" said Mr. Sackville, "that seems quite a coincidence, doesn't it? I hope she didn't lose her children?"

"She lost one, anyhow," said Adam.

Mr. Sackville made a melancholy sound with his lips. "Poor lady. Did her child die?"

"No," said Adam, "she gave it to the charwoman."

"For keeps, so to speak?" Mr. Sackville asked, "or was it what you might call baby-farming?"

"I don't know," Adam said, "but anyhow, the charwoman left it in a tram."

"That's almost suggestive of Oscar Wilde, isn't it? More like an invention than a fact?" Mr. Sackville argued. "I really can't remember a similar case except, of course, Rousseau; he always did that with his children."

"Gave them to the char-woman?" Adam asked in astonishment.

"Well, not exactly the char-woman," said Mr. Sackville, "but he gave them to the Foundling Hospital, so that they were as completely lost to him as if he had given them to the char-woman and she had left them about in trams. Not of course that there were trams in Rousseau's time, although I've been told that there were omnibuses in Paris as long ago as the seventeenth century. . . . Did a man called Pascal have something to do with it?"

Adam said that Pascal was a religious writer, and he did not think that he had anything to do with omnibuses.

"But he was a mathematician, too," Mr. Sackville rejoined, "so he might have been a shareholder, mightn't he?" It was obvious that it did not matter to Mr. Sackville what he talked about so long as he had not to talk about *What Rot!*

But Adam had the gift of hanging on to his own ideas. "You were telling me," he ventured to assert, "what you thought about *What Rot!* from an acting point of view."

"From an acting point of view," Mr. Sackville declared without hesitation, "it's one of the finest plays ever written. Grips you, if it grips you at all, and I'm assuming that you like that sort of play or you wouldn't go to see it . . . it grips you from start to finish. Positively there's not a dull line in it. In that way it's far better than *East Lynne*, where the sentiment is a bit thick if always clean and thoroughly English, which *What Rot!* is not. And *What Rot!* is always cheerful. *East Lynne* is almost as sad as *King Lear*. . . . But please don't think I rank it with *Lear*. The Bard stands alone."

"Did Mr. Onsin write *East Lynne* too?" Adam inquired.

Mr. Sackville repeated the question pensively, and added the question: "What are you talking about?"

"I mean," said Adam, "did he write *East Lynne* as well as *What Rot!*"

For once Mr. Sackville's slightly melancholy smile broadened to laughter. "I've never heard dear old Oswald say he wrote *East Lynne*," said he, "and I rather think it was done before he was born. I don't pay much attention to the name of an author of a play unless it's Shakespeare or Pinero or some one like that, but when I used to

In London

play in it I remember I was told it was an adaptation from a novel by a woman."

"What part did you play in it?" Adam asked.

"The heavy part," Mr. Sackville said apologetically; "I always played gentlemanly heavies in those days," and on Adam asking the nature of a gentlemanly heavy, he went on: "Aristocratic seducers, you know. In *East Lynne* I was Sir Francis Levison, the baronet who ruins Lady Isabel Carlyle; I never liked doing it, for of course the man is not really a gentleman, also I had to wear a crepe hair moustache, which spoils the expression of one's face. Now in *What Rot!* it's such a relief to play a gentleman who really is one, besides being clean-shaven. Lord Algy is really a delightful part, you have the sympathy of the audience right through. I always feel when I play it that they really want me to catch Lady Lucina and are always afraid that she may escape me in the end. It's so jolly to play a determined fellow who is at the same time gentle and never insists on his rights, and it's so dramatic at the end of every act to be able to say after each disappointment: 'Love will find out a way.' Mind you, I don't like the bit at the end where they realise the poster, but Oswald would have it so."

"You mean," said Adam, "where Lord Algy puts on Lady Lucina's nightdress?"

Mr. Sackville nodded. "Yes, I always feel that's coarse. But then it's so cleverly led up to by her putting on his pyjamas, not to say his tall hat, that I think in the drama, if I may call it so, most audiences overlook the suggestion of indelicacy. If I couldn't persuade myself of that I really couldn't bring myself to play the part."

Said Adam: "I don't like that business of undressing her as the curtain is coming down."

"Oh, I don't know," Mr. Sackville protested.

"It's an extraordinarily ingenious curtain ; sentimental from one point of view and at the same time cleanly funny. I never knew an audience yet that didn't laugh when he came to the seventh pair of undies, and as I know for sure that she wears at least twelve, I never feel there's anything really risky in it."

"Don't you ? " said Adam, and added : " I'd rather play Ned Burke than Lord Algy."

"There's no doubt that Ned is a topping part," Mr. Sackville said cheerily, "and I prophesy that you're going to have a topping success in it."

For once a prophecy came true and Adam's seventeenth birthday was marked by a successful first appearance such as has fallen to the lot of not one actor in twenty thousand. He himself was unprepared for and puzzled by it, knowing that he was not even playing the part as well as he had rehearsed it, and conscious of all sorts of difficulties arising from his inexperience. But from first to last his scenes, such as they were, went well, and even when he dived up in his one important speech the audience applauded sympathetically.

Mr. Sackville greeted him with enthusiasm at the end. "What did I say ? " he raised his gentle voice in triumph to inquire : " I told you you would run away from us all," he hesitated, and added chivalrously, "except, of course, that exquisite performer, Miss Dartmouth . . . and you've done it ! "

Adam tried not to pant with emotion as he bumbled, "Was I really very good ? "

He was disappointed to hear Mr. Sackville answer in a more judicial tone : "Well, no, I'd hardly say as a question of technique that you were as good even as I was when I played it. But how could you be without experience ! That will come. . . . The point is that instinctively you know how to get on good terms with your audience. If an actor can do that, his career is safe. But mind you, Mr. Quinn,

In London

to get on with your audience means that you can make your living, but it doesn't mean that you're an artist . . . though I hope you'll work at your art until you become one. . . ."

But Adam was not listening. In the excitement of the moment he wanted to open his heart. . . . "Look here, Mr. Sackville," he blurted, "my name is not Quinn, not my real name."

"Few men use their real names on the stage," Mr. Sackville answered: "Though it's more usual now than when I went on the stage. . . . May I ask what your real name is?"

Adam's cheeks were already scarlet from the hot water with which he had removed such vestiges of grease-paint as his cocoa-butter had failed to dislodge; so he had not the appearance of blushing as he said: "I don't know." . . . He added defiantly, as answer to the other's look of astonishment: "I'm a bastard."

Mr. Sackville's face fell, and Adam imagined he recoiled with horror. But in a second his kindly visage wore its most genial smile as he said heartily: "How perfectly charming! . . . and how splendid of you! . . . you must tell me some day how it happened. . . . Life is so full of romance. . . . I always think of good old Oscar Wilde's *Importance of Being Earnest*. . . . Glorious fellow, Oscar Wilde . . . very tragic that he should have died. . . . And so you call yourself Quinn? . . . Was that your father's name, I mean your dear mother's?"

"My mother's name," Adam answered determinedly, "was Smith . . . her husband's name was Macfadden."

Mr. Sackville glowed with interest: "Now I do call that a delightful coincidence," he declared. "My mother's name was Macfadden and her husband was called Smith. . . . He was my father, you understand." His tone was apologetic.

"Then where did Mr. Sackville come in?" Adam

asked incautiously, but without offending his friend.

"Sackville," he replied, "is pure fancy. . . . Like Quinn, you know. . . . Or is Quinn perhaps a family name?"

It was on the tip of Adam's tongue to tell Mr. Sackville about his grandfather, the Baronet, but when it came to the point he hesitated. That would entail an explanation about the Marchesa that he deemed unchivalrous. . . . And after all could he be sure that she really was his grandmother? How ridiculous it would be if Mr. Sackville threw cold water on the suggestion. . . . Not that Mr. Sackville would do anything so ungentlemanly and unkind. He ended by telling Mr. Sackville that it was Mr. Macarthy who suggested that he should call himself Quinn.

"Well," Mr. Sackville said, "Quinn was a famous stage name in the eighteenth century, second only to Garrick's. Perhaps in the twentieth you'll make it second to none."

And this time Adam quite visibly blushed.

Chapter Thirteen

JANE NIGHTINGALE

It was on the Saturday that Adam made his first unforgettable success. On the Sunday he rested, having lain awake most of the night, feverishly playing his part to the bedclothes. They were less appreciative than the Bank Holiday audience at the Chatsworth Theatre. It was an uncommonly hot night for April, and he awoke from what slumber he was allowed with doubts as to any success being worth the loss of an hour's sleep. Presently Mr. Sackville, looking neat and incredibly youthful in a sort of marine costume suggesting a naval officer in mufti, appeared with the London papers.

"The revival is no end of a success," he said. "I thought you'd like to know. That means we shall be a success too."

In his interest in his own performance, Adam had quite forgotten that the real *What Rot!* was being done in London and their poor little show was a mere country cousin. And even Mr. Sackville's pleasant smile was a trifle less pleasant as he read out the opinion of the *Sunday Times* that Mr. Onsin was quite inimitable in the part of Lord Algy, and furthermore that Miss Woodbine Blake's Ned Burke was a lesson to older players in stage technique. Never had the part been played so naturally and yet so surely with regard to stage effect. . . . Adam understood his friend to be of opinion that the critic of this journal was a damned something or other, and gathered that Mr. Sackville was moved. But he soon recovered that seemly

Jane Nightingale

cheerfulness which made him so agreeable a companion and one so valuable for a moody and impressionable young artist ; for by this time Adam had discovered that he really was an artist by desire if hardly by accomplishment. He suggested that after breakfast they should climb Beachy Head. Adam, feeling that he could scale Parnassus, agreed.

As they turned from the street where they modestly lodged and faced westward along the front, Adam recalled his first experience of the sea at Bray. He deemed Eastbourne to be an incredibly luxurious reconstruction of that attractively situated but not imposing watering-place. And to his brain, this sunny yet misty morning not too clear, Beachy Head was little different from Bray Head. He remembered, however, that it was of greater historic fame. When they were so far up it as Mr. Sackville felt inclined to go, being a little abashed by the multitudes of convalescent soldiers in butcher's blue who jeered at his attire or apostrophised his suspect conscience, Adam asked suddenly : " It was somewhere off here, wasn't it, that the French fleet beat the English and Dutch ? "

Mr. Sackville let fall a look of pained disapproval. " The French beat the English and Dutch ? " He turned over the words as if analysing some secret meaning in them. " You mean perhaps that We beat the French and Dutch ? "

" I never heard of your doing that," Adam rejoined sturdily : " Though I'll not say it wasn't done. It seems to me that every one beats every one else in turn if you leave it to the end of time."

" There may be something in that," Mr Sackville admitted, " but I don't believe in any navy beating ours."

" What about the Dutch in the Medway ? " Adam asked.

Mr. Sackville smiled in gentlemanly triumph.

In London

"Nelson saw to it that they didn't remain in the Medway long."

"He had long sight," said Adam, "to see what happened a hundred years before he was born."

Mr. Sackville, not quite sneeringly, but just a little superciliously replied: "Did I say Nelson? You might have understood that I meant Drake."

"Try Blake," Adam suggested. "He might have done it if he'd lived a little longer."

Mr. Sackville made a movement that was almost suggestive of impatience. "I do not profess to be a scholar," he said. "But I think, my wise young Irish friend, that you will admit the Dutch did not remain in the Medway long."

"They remained long enough to burn your best battleships," Adam told him.

This time the actor's face really fell, and he answered simply: "They never told me that at school. I thought it was just a tip-and-go business like the German raids on the north-east coast. I didn't suppose there was anything really in it. I'm not a Jingo, I'm sure, but the English have always won in the end, haven't they? Muddled through, you know, if you like to put it in that way."

Adam admitted himself insufficiently equipped in historic lore to say whether the English had won in the end or not. He added: "Hastings is just round the corner from here, isn't it?"

Mr. Sackville said it was not far away, and waved his hand to the east and to the west with a slight swerving to north and south. It was an effective though not informing gesture; he had the appearance of knowing where it was without conviction as to the propriety of divulging the secret. He mentioned that it was on the same railway system, and went on to inquire with something like deference whether Adam thought there was any chance of the Germans constructing enough Zeppelins to conquer England from the air. He was of opinion

that Zeppelins and poison gas ought not to be allowed.

Adam said he knew nothing about the possibilities of Zeppelins, and that no sort of warfare ought to be allowed.

"Oh, come!" Mr. Sackville cried, "you're a downright little Philistine! Would you do away with such things as the 'Charge of the Light Brigade' and 'On Countrymen, unto the walls once more, and 'Fight on! fight on!' said Sir Richard Grenville? I hate cruelty as much as anything, and I'm sure that even if I were of a fighting age my heart and digestion would make me no use in the trenches, but I do think war is a great and noble thing for young fellows whose constitutions are equal to roughing it. I sometimes think it fortunate that I have no family to ask me what I did in the Great War. Not that I am ashamed of what I do, by any means, but young people don't understand what a great service the actor does his country by keeping people cheered up in moments of depression."

"It seems to me," Adam returned, "that no one I've seen in London was depressed, except when there was an alarm of an air-raid."

"You've never seen a real air-raid, perhaps?" Mr. Sackville pointed out. "You'll find it most depressing when it comes."

Adam's mind went off at a tangent. "Did you say you had no family? I thought you were married." He wondered to himself why he thought this.

Mr. Sackville shook his head and sighed, looking away sentimentally towards the horizon. "The only woman I ever loved," he said gently . . . Adam waited for him to say more but he appeared to regard the sentence as complete.

His finely woebegone expression thrilled his young friend, who murmured the surmise that the so exclusively honoured lady was dead.

"Worse than that," said Mr. Sackville hoarsely.

In London

Adam delved in his experience for something worse than that and ventured: "She's not a nun?"

"A nun!" Mr. Sackville echoed with a horror-stricken tone, betraying his descent from the evangelical branch of the Smith family. "No, not that. She had her hour of temptation. . . . The Cowley sisters . . . but thank God she resisted the fascination of the veil. Though I have often thought how magnificently it would have become her. I can see her," his voice rose lyrically, "I can see her as Roxane in the last act of *Cyrano de Bergerac*." He added moodily: "I have never played Cyrano. As poor Lewis Waller, whose funeral I had recently the privilege to attend, used to say: 'It was a pity that no romantic actor ever played Cyrano.' He looked at his watch: "I think we had better be turning homewards."

"But," said Adam, falling into step beside him, "you haven't told me what became of her. Did she go mad?"

"No," said Mr. Sackville promptly. "She went no such thing. It is I, I who have gone mad on account of Penelope Nightingale."

"Penelope Nightingale," Adam repeated. "Is that her name?"

"That is not altogether her name, not in the eyes of the world," Mr. Sackville said. "She calls herself Jane Nightingale, but I prefer to think of her as Penelope."

"Why?" Adam asked him point blank.

"Why?" said Mr. Sackville. "Why, indeed," and lifting his hat he ran his fine hand through his beautiful hair as if that were an answer to the question.

"I still don't know what happened to her," Adam said. "She wasn't seduced, was she?"

Mr. Sackville frowned. "Do not be coarse," he said. "You are speaking of a lady."

"But wasn't the lady in *East Lynne* seduced?" Adam asked.

Jane Nightingale

"I don't see what that has to do with it," Mr. Sackville propounded. "When you're older you will understand the indelicacy of the suggestion."

This criticism threw Adam into a somewhat sulky silence which perhaps disappointed Mr. Sackville; for he presently volunteered the information that Miss Nightingale had broken his heart. As Adam still kept pouted lips he went on: "You would ask me how, and I will tell you. She loves another who is as unworthy of her as," he looked to the heavens for inspiration which came in this form, "as Mr. Brown was of Queen Victoria."

"What Mr. Brown?" Adam asked. "Mr. Brown whose soul goes marching on?"

If Mr. Sackville heard this question, he was not, as he would modestly say, enough of a scholar to answer it. And while Adam tramped on, humming "Glory, glory Alleluja," and trying to imagine a romance between his vague conception of Queen Victoria and yet vaguer notion of the Reverend Mr. Brown of Harper's Ferry, Mr. Sackville reverted to the more congenial subject of his own romance. "I would like you to see her and tell me what you think of her," said he.

"I know her picture well," said Adam, "and there's a queer old statue of her they put up when I was a lad in Kildare Street."

Mr. Sackville shook his head wistfully. "I think there is some mistake," said he. "There is a statue of a Miss Nightingale in Waterloo Place, but that is not my Miss Nightingale."

"Oh!" Adam blurted, "I was thinking of Queen Victoria."

Mr. Sackville's tone stiffened. "If you are not interested in the subject of my conversation, let us drop it."

Said Adam: "You said Queen Victoria."

The actor pointed out with dignity that the mention of her penultimate Majesty was subsidiary

In London

to the tragic story of his relations with Miss Penelope or Jane Nightingale. "Do you wish me to speak more of this or not?" he asked.

And Adam, who was acquiring the current English idiom, replied: "Carry on, old bean."

"I think," said Mr. Sackville, "that you sometimes forget the difference in our ages."

Adam, awakening suddenly to the need for tact, said: "You do look so jolly young, you know, and it's all the more wonderful for a man who has had such a," he recalled a word which had pleased him in the papers he had sold in his infancy, "such a tragic romance in his life."

His friend was mollified. "Tragic romance is the very word for it. How romantic and how tragic you will best understand when you see her. . . . If you wish to see her."

"You bet your boots," said Adam heartily, "I should just love to see her."

"Then you shall do so," said Mr. Sackville, again looking at his watch, "for on our way back, if I have timed myself correctly, we should meet her coming out of church."

"Righto!" said Adam. "I hope you'll introduce me to her."

"I cannot promise that," said Mr. Sackville, "without first asking her permission."

"Oh!" said Adam, finding this rather pusillanimous of Mr. Sackville: but it whetted his curiosity. "Who did you say it was she was in love with?"

Mr. Sackville frowned. "I did not say with whom she was in love," said he, "and I do not feel that without some risk of a breach of confidence I could tell you his name, but to give you some indication of the nature of the man, I will tell you that he is one of the most brilliant men in the country, and has written one of the most brilliant plays."

Jane Nightingale

"Oh!" Adam snapped promptly, "I guess Bernard Shaw."

Mr. Sackville turned a severe face upon him. "Surely you are aware that Mr. Shaw is a married man. If you think that Miss Nightingale would allow herself to fall in love with a married man, you are mistaken."

"But you did say he was unworthy of her," Adam reminded him, and repeated to himself again, "One of the most brilliant men in the country and has written one of the most brilliant plays. . . . One of the most brilliant plays." He looked a little sheepishly at Mr. Sackville, saying in a low voice: "I suppose Mr. and Mrs. Onsin are legally married?"

"For all I know to the contrary they may be," said Mr. Sackville, "but what has that to do with it?"

"Why," said Adam, "you said he was the author of one of the most brilliant plays of the time and I guessed that you might mean *What Rot!*"

"My God!" said Mr. Sackville. "Not another word. You must never mention this to any one."

"Righto!" said Adam cheerily, without having any idea what it was he was not to mention. His interest in Mr. Sackville's Dulcinea was sadly diminished by the information that she had lost her heart to the manager of the Grand Theatre and reputed author of *What Rot!* but he felt it proper to express a languid hope that he might have the good fortune to meet or at least to look upon her as she came out of church.

This good fortune was his: as he stayed his companion that he might read the poster announcing a play called *How Dublin Does It*, apparently staged at some minor Eastbourne place of entertainment. and said: "It's a queer thing, but I saw that piece in Dublin last January." . . . Mr. Sackville with a dramatic gesture gripped his arm.

"She's coming!" he announced in a sort of

In London

shouted whisper, and lifting his hat, dropped it by his side, standing bareheaded and reverential in such fashion as he would have followed had his place in time suffered him to attend the funeral rites of Joan of Arc or Sarah Siddons.

Adam, turning from the poster with its suggestion of half-wakened home-sickness, beheld approach two uniformed ladies. Both in their way were beautiful, but he concentrated his glance on the assured choice of his friend. She was tall, rather buxom yet lithe, with something of the brilliancy of Barbara Burns, but happier looking and perhaps more dashing, with a downright stride from the hips characteristic of the Englishwoman whom war has brought into her own. Yet he had a suspicion that somewhere in her allure there lurked a flavour of the vulgar . . . a suggestion of the possibility of her falling in love with such a mountebank as Oswald Onsin. She passed Mr. Sackville with no more notice than if he had been an itinerant minstrel holding out his hat for undeserved alms. More gracious was the mien of her companion, an elderly lady, as Adam conceived, but well preserved and singularly attractive, with her intellectual, kindly face and shapely, fine drawn features, and exquisitely large blue eyes, full of a cheerful sadness, as if she had suffered worse than most women but sang no song about it.

"Well," Mr. Sackville said at length: "Now that you have seen Miss Nightingale, you perhaps understand all that she means to me."

"I'm afraid," Adam answered with conscious superiority, "I was more interested in the old lady."

"What old lady?" Mr. Sackville sternly demanded: "If you mean the elder of the two ladies we have just passed, I need hardly say that she was Miss Nightingale."

Adam's mouth dropped open in callow astonishment: "Go on!" said he.

Chapter Fourteen

DUBLIN DOES IT

AFTER the meeting with the two ladies in uniform, Adam walked back beside his histrionic mentor, bewildered into silence. His respect for Mr. Sackville, now that he knew he preferred the elder to the younger beauty, had leaped heavenwards: but his surprise at Mr. Sackville's good taste was obliterated by his astoundment at Miss Nightingale's madness. . . . How could such a woman be in love with Mr Oswald Onsin? . . . He would have liked to ask his companion this, but he felt that the question had a delicate implication which were better avoided. After luncheon, having drunk very nearly a pint of cider, he said cheerily to his friend: "I'm sure you could cut him out."

Mr. Sackville brightened in what Adam found a very flattering manner, saying eagerly, though still in a minor key: "I'm sure if you who know him so well think that!" This again he treated as a sentence, and Adam was too pleased by the suggestion that he knew the great, if somewhat underbred actor, very well, that he failed to notice that it was merely a subjunctive clause. He repeated his assertion with even greater confidence, and Mr. Sackville said: "I wish," and treated that again as yet another sentence. Then they both fell asleep, and nothing much more happened that Sunday except that Adam wrote to Mr. Macarthy, who was still at Jermyn Street, that his first appearance had been declared not half bad, that Mr. Sackville continued to be very kind to him and

In London

had pointed out to him a very beautiful lady called Penelope or Jane Nightingale with whom he, Mr. Sackville, was in love, but she, Miss P. or J. Nightingale, preferred Mr. Onsin, of all people, and what did Mr. Macarthy think about it?

By the Tuesday morning Adam had a letter from Mr. Macarthy thanking him for his, congratulating him upon his success, cautioning him not to be betrayed by it into vanity, and admonishing him that whatever publicity Mr. Sackville as an artist might wish to give his passion for Miss Nightingale, it would be wise to assume that Miss Nightingale's for Mr. Onsin was a secret to be locked in the bosom. "From your description of her," wrote Mr. Macarthy, "I take it that the lady would be oldish for you."

But on that Tuesday Adam was not thinking of Miss Nightingale, and the interests of Mr. Sackville's love affairs had paled before a fierier concernment. On the Easter Monday afternoon he had repeated his success of the Saturday and Mr. Sackville and he, hastening to their lodgings to snatch a meal before they rang up again at night, beheld a bill-sticker, or one suddenly thrust into the office of bill-sticker, employed in a fashion not customary on public holidays. He was feverishly plastering over the announcements of the entertainment called: *How Dublin Does It*. Mr. Sackville with professional concern asked him his reason for this, expressing the hope that no one had fallen ill. The man, preserving a sulky silence, Mr. Sackville said directly: "Why are they withdrawing *How Dublin Does It*?"

And the man, splashing paste over Mr. Sackville, answered after the manner of one called upon unjustly to work when he would be idle, said, "I am a Bulgarian if Dublin hasn't gone and done it." And between the newspapers and gossip, Adam played Ned Burke that night knowing that his grandmother with her Infant Druids, assisted by

Mr. Porphyro Pink and a few hundred grown men, were striving to war down that hydra-headed monster, the British Empire, in the burning streets of his native city. He played purely mechanically, barely aware of the fact that he was a greater success than ever.

There followed days of crazy tragi-comedy. Here was he employed in amusing Englishmen with his acting in an all but base piece of silliness, while the brothers of these Englishmen were burning and battering down the homes of his friends and doing to death under the most despicable of the arbitrary laws of the tyrant those friends themselves. When he read of the judicial murder of James Connolly, propped up all maimed and broken in Kilmainham prison yard to face the firing party, he wrote from Portsmouth to Mr. Macarthy, asking if he might throw up his part and shake the dust of England from his shoes. But Mr. Macarthy, detained in London, replied temperately that he must do nothing of the kind. "Don't abuse Englishmen," he wrote, "they are quite as good as we are. The enemy is the sullen brutality of mankind. I prophesy a day will come in your lifetime, if not in mine, when James Connolly will be publicly honoured by Englishmen, and Maxwell relegated to the dustheap of oblivion with all the other military asses, neither better nor worse than he, who have borne that name."

Adam at seventeen found it hard to leave to Time the duty of avenging foolish heroes upon senseless bullies . . . but although he thought nothing of defying the Empire he could not find courage to fly in the face of his guardian. He knew that Mr Macarthy's advice, if unpalatable, was sound.

But when the news came through that Mr. O'Meagher and his two sons had been slain, charging behind the O'Rahilly up Moore Street, there was a fresh crisis, and after the night's performance at

In London

Brighton Adam trained to London to consult his guardian, still at Jermyn Street. It appeared that Patrick and Columba had both been Infant Druids, and went into action with old sword-bayonets or some such form of lethal weapon, but their father, a well-known pacifist, had been shot down in the act of shaking an umbrella at the British army. Adam pictured Josephine's father and brothers in red burial blent by English machine-guns, and was for assaulting Whitehall single-handed. It seemed to him that all iniquity resided there.

But Mr. Macarthy still counselled submission to the logic of fact. "The British Government is ruled by a clique of bloody-minded men," he declared. "But their energies are directed mainly to combating a foreign power yet bloodier-minded and incomparably more efficient in crime than themselves. When a policeman is locked in a deadly struggle with a homicidal lunatic that is not the moment for trying to trip him up on the plea that he is a drunken scoundrel and beats his wife." He added: "I knew too little of those plucky boys to judge whether their death is to be regarded as a misfortune, but I am quite sure that in their father's story there was nothing that became him more; for his death showed the sincerity of his attachment to a cause which his life tended to make ridiculous."

Adam turned away to press his forehead against a pane of glass of the window facing the offices of the R.S.P.C.A. "I can't bear to think of it," he said, "and what about Mrs. O'Meagher . . . ? What about Josephine?"

Mr. Macarthy's tone hardened. "If I were you I should not worry about them," he said. "They will find consolation in the thought that the poor lads had been to Mass in the morning, or wore rosary beads in their hats, and so have perpetual light now shining upon them."

Dublin Does It

Adam smiled grimly : " But Josephine loved her father . . ." he began. Mr. Macarthy cut him short.

" Who told you so ? "

On reflection Adam was not sure that any one had told him so. It had seemed to him that Josephine as a child had appeared attached to her father, but, after all, less so than he to her. . . . And a girl who enters a convent against her father's wish can hardly be said to love him. Yet he did not like to hear Mr. Macarthy say with unwonted severity : " Josephine appears to me to be as selfish as her mother."

He looked at his guardian in remonstrance. " I should never have thought Josephine was selfish, and surely Mrs. O'Meagher was a very good Catholic ? "

" To be a very good Catholic," said Mr. Macarthy, " in the vulgar sense of the words, is to be neither good nor Catholic in the real sense. It happens that I have known Mrs. O'Meagher for the greater part of my life, and you may take it from me that she was a naturally good and sweet woman, absolutely worm-eaten with superstition until she had lost all sense of right and wrong."

" I should never have suspected her of that," said Adam.

" Unfortunately she never suspects herself of it," said Mr. Macarthy. " She is probably this moment offering up her two sons as a sacrifice to that pet demon to whom she has already sacrificed her daughter."

Adam was shocked at the vigour of Mr. Macarthy's denunciation of Mrs. O'Meagher. " You wouldn't say," he cried, " that she really wished her sons to be killed ? "

It was Mr. Macarthy's turn to smile savagely. " O'Meagher told me himself," said he, " that she prayed for them to die like this from the moment she heard of their joining the Infant Druids."

In London

"But I thought," said Adam, "that she disapproved of Sinn Fein altogether because the Bishop was against it?"

"Quite so," said Mr. Macarthy, "but what troubled her was their friendship with the Marchesa. She thought they would be better dead than friends with her."

Even from a point so near to Josephine, his heart's desire so hopelessly lost in the depths of the Church, Adam's mind easily wandered. "And the Marchesa?" he queried. "She seems to have led the fighting in the Mountjoy Ward, but I can't make out what became of her."

Mr. Macarthy's smile became very mysterious. "Remember that she was the daughter of the Earl of Derrydown, and in Ireland the peerage is above the law."

In protest Adam breathed the name of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, a fragment of whose coffin had been a cherished relic in the O'Meaghers's house at Sandycove. But Mr. Macarthy waived away the pretensions of Lord Edward to be considered as below the law. "Accidentally shot by an Englishman," he explained. "No Irish policeman would have ventured to touch him even by mistake. Some people think poor Casement's knighthood might save him if he were tried in Dublin, so they've sent him to London to be done to death by his peers."

"You don't mean they'll hang him too?" Adam cried, conjuring up a tall and dreamy figure he had seen lounging in the Abbey stalls, one he could not associate with violence in any form.

"Hang him!" Mr. Macarthy echoed. "They'd draw and quarter him if they were not afraid of reviving a dangerous precedent. Even the Attorney-General knows there is such a thing as dying too hard."

Adam shuddered at the thought of the blood on

Dublin Does It

the hands that England had given him so hospitably. He said at length: "Anyhow, they've let the Marchesa go?"

"I don't know that they have," Mr. Macarthy assured him: "It's only a guess. She may possibly have been destroyed in the blowing up of some building. You know as well as I that there never was a man yet with greater contempt for death than she. But of course an old lady like that would be fairly easily overpowered when it came to the last cartridge and then the wheels within wheels would begin to work at once . . ." He glanced at the clock. "If you're to act to-night, and of course you must, you'll want to catch the 4.25 from Victoria. I'll drive you down there now, and on the way we'll look in on some one who may be able to say what has become of the Marchesa."

From Jermyn Street a taxi carried them, Adam agog with curiosity, down Regent Street, past the theatre and under the Admiralty arch, and past the Horse Guards Parade, and through Story's Gate into a labyrinth of winding streets that he did not know. They stopped at a door on which Adam read only the number, which was 38, and that being twice nineteen impressed itself upon him. On Mr. Macarthy's summons it opened cautiously and reluctantly until his figure was seen by the janitor, who then at once admitted him. Mr. Macarthy said as a matter of course: "Mr. O'Hagan-Bathe is in?"

"I'm not sure, Mr. Macarthy," the janitor said, "but I'll just inquire." He disappeared for an instant and returned to say: "Captain O'Hagan-Bathe asks if you'll kindly walk in."

They were ushered into a large, old-fashioned, book-lined room with great windows looking out northwards on St. James's Park. In this Mr. or Captain O'Hagan-Bathe rose courteously to welcome them. He was a biggish man with a smallish head

In London

and an infinitesimal moustache of the type worn by bucks in the days of Nell Gwynne's residence at the other side of the Park. He wore an eyeglass and khaki, which somehow did not appear to Adam to be what one might call genuine or fighting khaki. His Sam Browne belt shone with the same brilliant lustre as his brown boots and his eyeglass, but although these things were obviously spot new and fit to go anywhere, he himself was not intended by God for the firing line. It was not that he would have feared to face the onslaught of the Huns, provided the call came at a convenient hour of the day. For the rest, his age, which was older than his manner, gave him a better excuse for remaining at home than did that of the average gentleman employed in Government Offices.

To Mr. Macarthy he was civility itself. "I was thinking of you this very moment," said he, "I've just got some thundering good whisky." He put out his hand as though to grope in an aperture marked "Strictly Confidential," when Mr. Macarthy smilingly shook his head, protesting that he never drank it.

"Sure I forgot," said Mr. or Captain O'Hagan-Bathe. "Perhaps our young friend here . . . ?"

"Too young," said Mr. Macarthy, who had warned Adam to keep his theatrical success to himself and to appear as juvenile as possible.

"Well, well," said their host, "that makes the more for me," and he helped himself, quite moderately for an official who appeared to be head of his department. "And now, you spalpeen, what is it you want out of me? Not to get off any more of your damned lunatic friends from getting what they asked for, I hope?"

"Oh, no," said Mr. Macarthy easily, "I know all that has passed away from the power of decent men like yourself to those drum-headed imbeciles round the corner."

Dublin Does It

Their host nodded sympathetically. "B—fools," he agreed, "but sure they'd great provocation. There can be no doubt that Connolly's men shot down unarmed soldiers."

"And you find that a good reason," said Mr. Macarthy, "for soldiers shooting down an unarmed Connolly?"

Mr. O'Hagan-Bathe pursed his lips deprecatingly. "I don't say I'd like to do it myself," said he, "But sure, soldiers are the same all the world over. You can't expect them to see farther than the ends of their noses, and you know Connolly really was quite outside the pale." He indicated some papers. "I have convincing proof here that the man was what I'm told they call a Syndicalist."

Mr. Macarthy shot a glance at Adam and asked with an air of innocence: "Now what exactly is that?"

Mr. O'Hagan-Bathe snorted. "How the blazes should I know? But I can tell you it's something they don't mean to have in Ireland if Ned Carson can prevent it, and I'm told he can count even on that fellow Redmond to help him in that."

"It would interest me to know what the Irish Office thinks of Syndicalism," Mr. Macarthy said.

"The Irish Office has something better to think about," their host growled, with perhaps affected ill-humour.

Mr. Macarthy smiled at Mr. O'Hagan-Bathe and said genially: "Look here, old man, let's talk about something you are interested in. . . . What has become of the Marchesa?"

"You mean young Derrydown's aunt? That frantic old idiot?" Mr. O'Hagan-Bathe said. "Damned if I know. I'd have shot her out of hand because she was rude to my mother thirty years ago at a Castle Ball just when she was beginning to go dotty after the death of that fellow Byron-Quinn. . . . By the way, we've just had a very odd

In London

piece of news in cipher." He glanced at Adam, his lips silently querying: "Can the boy be trusted?" and on Mr. Macarthy nodding, he rang the bell. "Have you a copy of that B.T. message, the last one?" he asked the attendant clerk, and when they were alone again, holding the paper in his hand, he went on in a low voice: "I needn't ask you if you know Pleasant Street, Dublin, or if you know what sort of a street it was. I suppose there was never a Trinity boy yet couldn't answer that question." Adam instinctively rose and gazed out of the window across St. James's Park, and standing there, there fell upon his ears these words, uttered in tones which O'Hagan-Bathe vaguely intended should not reach him: "No. 7 was blown up and burned to the ground in the small hours of this morning, and the firemen have recovered the body of a man and a woman. She is supposed to have been the keeper of the house, she lived with a fellow called O'Toole, one of our . . ." the next words were inaudible, but presently he heard Mr. O'Hagan-Bathe say in a voice made loud with laughter: "And the amazing thing is, our fellow Newton insists that this black-guard O'Toole was the son of the old Marchesa by that hare-brained fellow, Byron-Quinn!"

And in this fashion Adam, staring stonily across St. James's Park towards the sedate authority of Pall Mall and the luxurious stateliness of Carlton House Terrace, and that queer old toy-brick palace of St. James's, learned with a mixture of shame and joy that he was an orphan.

Then he heard Mr. Macarthy say: "Well, if you really won't tell me what's become of the Marchesa, I suppose you won't, and we'd better be off!" He added as he left the room: "It's my conviction, you know, that you've got her hidden away in your chambers in Bury Street."

Mr. O'Hagan-Bathe shook his head gravely. "Indeed I have not," said he, "I really wouldn't

risk it, not even for the sake of young Derrydown, though he's a charming fellow and we often play billiards at the Carlton." Tears filled his eyes, giving him a momentary resemblance to Mr. Sackville as he added huskily: "Apart from that no gentleman can forgive an insult to his mother."

"It could not have been a serious insult," Mr. Macarthy said.

Mr. O'Hagan-Bathe blazed with indignation. "Serious," he snapped, "scurrilous to the last degree. She said she was a Plymouth Brother. My dear mother who was niece of the Lord Bishop of Brownstown! Thank God we've been Church of Ireland on both sides ever since penal times. And the thing was all the more impertinent coming from a woman whose own mother kept a black Scripture Reader."

Asked Macarthy, smiling: "What did she keep him for?"

"You're not the first to ask that," said Mr. O'Hagan-Bathe, "but I never heard any answer." He was grave again: "But if Daphne Page thinks I've forgotten her impudence to my mother, she'll find herself mistaken."

And then they were back in their taxi with no word spoken till they reached Victoria and Mr. Macarthy put his young friend in the train. "All the world's a stage," said he, "and all the men and women merely players. Hackneyed but true. Play your part as well as you can, Adam, that's the best we can do with life." A handshake and Adam was alone, returning to Brighton to play his part as well as he could.

Chapter Fifteen

MR. SACKVILLE BEHAVES AS A GENTLEMAN

ADAM, speeding back to Brighton after his interview with his guardian, slept in the train, huddled up between a soldier and a sailor. It was his first slumber since the news of Mr. O'Meagher's death and Patrick and Columba's had filled his horrified eyes. Compared with the pathos of that tragedy the annihilation of his own father and mother seemed but a grizzly jest. . . . He tried to be sorry for his mother, but failed. As for Mr. O'Toole, their relationship had always seemed as incredible as that between himself and his putative father, the late Malachy Macfadden, the tailor. All his filial emotion, and he was not wanting in it, went out to Mr. Macarthy, Herr Behre, and in a lesser degree, to Mr. O'Meagher: with the last-named dead and Herr Behre in America, it seemed that all must go to Mr. Macarthy. That night for once, owing to his weariness, he played badly, and after the performance Mr. Sackville remonstrated with him for slacking.

Adam, worn out, confided to him much of what had passed. Alternate langour and excitement made him even so incautious that he let slip his grandmother's relationship to the Earl of Derrydown.

Mr. Sackville was more impressed by this detail than by all the rest of the story put together. "Now that really is," said he, "a very remarkable coincidence, for the present Countess of Derrydown was the lady you saw walking with Miss Nightingale at Eastbourne, and she, I suppose, must be your grandmother's grand-daughter-in-law."

Mr. Sackville Behaves as a Gentleman

Adam suggested niece, and Mr. Sackville accepted this emendation. "The world," said Mr. Sackville, "is very small."

The profundity of this observation was lost on Adam, sunk in a yet more profound sleep, in which his friend undressed and put him all unconscious to bed. There he dreamed of his first awakening to life in the corner of Malachy Macfadden's squalid lodging beneath the shadowing walls of the Dublin Pro-cathedral . . . to hear the chafing of his mother's tongue and the clang of intermittent tram bells . . . he could see Mr. O'Toole, humorously vile, entering the door or maybe creeping with soft feet down the staircase. . . . What a father! . . . What a mother! . . . How did they come to bring him—to whom all that meant life and joy for them was hateful and despicable—into this breathing world. . . . Almost more mysterious still, how did that romantic warrior, Sir David Byron-Quinn, and his then sentimentally passionate beloved, Lady Daphne Page, beget such a monster of depravity as Byron O'Toole? . . . a dishonest menial, a Giovanni of the gutters, a whoremonger, and now it would appear, that meanest of all things, a spy. And now he and the mere animal of a woman on whom he had gotten Adam were gone with one another to the Plutonian shore, to await there in the company of Sir David the explanation of the causes that made them what they were. He asked himself if father and son had met in tears or fury or, as Mr. Macarthy seemed to think possible, in laughter at the vainness of their vanity in thinking to be other than they were.

It was almost too much for Adam, the smashing knowledge of this torrent of death among those with whom all his thoughts of childhood were connected. He recalled the first blow that death had dealt his friends: how, when almost at death's door himself, as a little child he had heard of the

In London

dying of his godmother, to call her no more, Miss or Mrs. Robinson. And then he who had brought him that news and taught him that his prayers might waft that unfortunate saint, as Father Innocent had called her, to heaven, he, Father Innocent, had died more or less by suicide. Before that had perished in drunken wrath the terrible and obscene Macfadden, that bugbear of his youth, who claimed him for a son when convenience bade him. Then death had held his hand awhile until suddenly, and as it were, forcing Adam himself to be his joint conspirator, he had reft from life Caroline Brady ; and now, and now he had swept his scythe still closer round Adam, yet Adam himself, he had rejected. Was it his fate to see perish all he loved while he lived on and on into old age ? One of his guardians was already gone, was he to lose them all ? . . . Was he to lose . . . he could not allow himself to think of it.

These were drear thoughts that haunted him when he could not sleep ; but the life of the theatre does not lend itself when one is young to dreariness, and a successful actor still in his teens, touring the provinces in the company of an older one who knows the ropes, has one of the jolliest lives in the world. The success of the *What Rot!* revival at the London theatre had given the piece a fresh lease of life also in the country, and the bookings of a second-class nature were easily bartered for first, and what with the big camps all over the country and the great towns full of munition workers rolling in ill-gotten gains, there was no necessity for the company to take a holiday that summer. Catastrophes such as the Battle of Jutland, slaying five thousand Englishmen in the full glory of life in five minutes, and all for nothing, made their compatriots all the more eager to spend their money enjoying *What Rot!* It seemed to Mr. Sackville that the English had muddled through to victory in

Mr. Sackville Behaves as a Gentleman

that transaction; it seemed to Adam that they had valiantly, more valiantly than himself, gone to the bottom of the sea.

The low comedian made dirty jokes about the loss of the *Queen Mary*: most of the company said cheerfully that whoever lost or whoever won it looked as if the war would go on for some time, and the plunge to doom of the *Hampshire* with Lord Kitchener on board confirmed the optimists. Miss Dartmouth wore heavy mourning for a week or ten days for some one she had lost, rumour said he had in life worn red tabs. Adam thought she looked adorable in mourning, but he had learned to be content to look upon Miss Dartmouth without engaging her in conversation, which was not her strong point. He was very content to act with her and she with him: with the exception of Mr. Sackville she was the only member of the company in whom he felt any interest, and that was not much. He was living now for his art, trying hard to get more and more legitimate effect in his taking little part, and at the same time definitely studying the literature of his profession, both ancient and modern.

October found them playing in the London suburbs where they had not only good local audiences, but even something of the overflow from the Grand, where the revival was having an unprecedented boom. No doubt to ease the public mind and convince them that the war was well in hand, leading members of the Cabinet were in constant attendance, and in his permanently retained box Lord Bulwark rested on the laurels he had won at the cost of eighty thousand lives in the Great Push.

For the moment Adam and Mr. Sackville had parted company, for while in the neighbourhood of London, the latter resided with his mother in West Kensington, and Adam went back to Miss Durward's welcoming arms at Norfolk Square. He had just

In London

realised that he really was very much more comfortable there than in the most comfortable rooms he had occupied on tour, and rather dreaded setting out again to face the privations of the north in winter, when a telephone message summoned him one morning to the Grand, where he found that Mr. Onsin required him to play Ned Burke in London while Miss Blake was away upon a holiday. Even without the inducement of an extra three guineas a week, Adam jumped at this proposal, though he felt a little shamefaced when he told Mr. Sackville about it that night. He feared the elder actor would resent or at least be hurt by his parting with him so cavalierly. But Mr. Sackville's attitude was quite otherwise.

"I cannot tell you," said he, "apart from the consideration of your advancement, how glad I am to know that Ned Burke will once more be played by an artist and not by a . . ." and on this occasion again Mr. Sackville thought it unnecessary verbally to complete his sentence. "I am only sorry for myself," said he, "that I am never likely again to have so agreeable a young gentleman to share my rooms on tour. Although," he added brightly, "one never knows, the long arm of coincidence . . ." this piece of anatomy clearly required no verb.

Adam, to turn their conversation on a subject that he knew to be of inexhaustible interest to him, inquired whether he had heard from Miss Nightingale lately, and Mr. Sackville surprised him with the answer that he had not only heard from her but had seen her. Whereupon Adam archly suggested that she would like to see Mr. Sackville employed in the pursuit of the Well-Beloved.

Mr. Sackville sighed: "I am sorry to say that when she saw it she found it a very vulgar play and reproached me with taking part in it."

"Rather a difficult lady," Adam suggested, "if she blames you and yet goes on being in love with . . ."

Mr. Sackville Behaves as a Gentleman

Mr. Sackville stopped him with a protesting hand. "She is a faithful soul," said he, "that is why I call her Penelope, though I am not her Telemachus."

"I shouldn't have thought," said Adam, "that she was old enough to be your mother."

Mr. Sackville threw a baffled look at his young friend, and suspecting a trembling at the corners of Adam's mouth, reddened, but with an effort he said frankly: "I thought Telemachus was the Latin name for Ulysses."

Adam, disarmed by his invincibly gentlemanly simplicity, said almost apologetically: "I couldn't be sure, but I think not. My Greek's so awfully bad that I dare not say anything about Homer, but anyhow, Fenelon makes Telemachus the son of Ulysses."

"Oh!" said poor Mr. Sackville, "fancy my not knowing that. . . . But I thought all names ending in 'us' must be Latin."

"Telemachus is Latin right enough," said Adam.

"Then why did the fellow you mentioned call him Telemachus?" Mr. Sackville argued.

"He didn't," said Adam, "he called him Telemaque."

"T-e-l-e-m-a-c-k?" Mr. Sackville suggested.

"No," said Adam regretfully, "T-e-l-e-m-a-q-u-e." He wished he could remember whether there was an accent.

Mr. Sackville turned to him as one seeing a hope of regaining his position. "Surely," said he, "in Greek that would be pronounced: 'Telemackway'?"

"It's French," said Adam.

"Oh!" Mr. Sackville positively cried, "how could Ulysses, who was a Greek, wasn't he, have a son with a French name?"

"In Greek," said Adam thoughtfully, "I'm not sure that the name of Ulysses was . . ."

"Don't!" groaned Mr. Sackville, "I can't bear it," and so far forgot himself as to make an impracticable

In London

suggestion about his late Majesty of Ithaca. "But anyhow," he added gravely, "that has nothing to do with Miss Nightingale."

Adam, biting his hare's foot, rouge and all, agreed. He ventured to add that he preferred the name of Jane to that of Penelope.

"I cannot admit that," said Mr. Sackville, "although, as you know, I am no scholar, I feel instinctively that Greek names are more beautiful than English." He added hastily: "Penelope was not French, was she?"

"No," said Adam, "I think not, but isn't Jane really a French name?"

"Is it?" Mr. Sackville asked with almost painful humility, but recovered himself to say proudly: "Well, anyhow, Miss Jane Nightingale is British through and through. Her father was born in Hanover when it was a British possession. . . ."

"Was it ever a British possession?" Adam asked.

This time it was Mr. Sackville's turn to smile politely. "Didn't you know," he said, "that up to the time of dear Queen Victoria, the king of England was also king of Hanover?"

"Are you sure," said Adam, "you don't mean that England was a Hanoverian possession?"

Again poor Mr. Sackville's face fell. "Was it?" he asked.

"No," said Adam, and Mr. Sackville again brightened.

"Of one thing I am quite sure," said he, "that in her innermost heart Jane Nightingale is as English as you or I," whereupon Adam quite incontinently flung his hare's foot in Mr. Sackville's face, and as incontinently Mr. Sackville's fist knocked him over with a blow on the nose.

This was scarcely delivered ere he heard his voice crying in entreaty: "Forgive me, Quinn, I apologise. When I talk of Miss Nightingale I forget myself, but I see clearly that I have been very tactless."

Chapter Sixteen

LADY DERRYDOWN AT HOME

THROUGH tears of physical anguish, induced by the shock to his proboscis, Adam gaped at Mr. Sackville, whose fine eyes were no less liquid with remorse. "All right, old bean," he stuttered, "my fault as much as yours." In his heart he felt this absurd quarrel to be symbolic of the contest between the sister islands; but, hopeless of explaining himself to Mr. Sackville, he just took his proffered hand and shook it.

"If you have forgiven me," said Mr. Sackville, "for behaving in such an un-English fashion—there are moments when the coarser fibre of the Macfaddens . . ." he checked himself confusedly, "there I am again, putting my foot in it!"

Adam's sense of humour conquered the pain in his nose. "The Macfadden's fibre, so far as I knew it, was coarse," he said.

Mr. Sackville bowed. "You are magnanimous," he declared, "and knowing that you are magnanimous I am going to ask you to grant me this favour—Never mention to Miss Nightingale that I knocked you down. If she suspected me of such brutality she would never speak to me again."

"It was only rough and tumble," said Adam stoutly, "but of course I shouldn't mention it to any one, unless as a bit of fun."

Mr. Sackville shook his head. "You don't know Miss Nightingale."

"And I don't suppose I ever will," Adam answered, not without guile.

In London

"Shall," Mr. Sackville admonished him, "is more correct English. 'I don't suppose I ever shall.'"

Adam was on the point of replying that Shakespeare did not think so, but refrained, repeating dutifully: "I don't suppose I ever shall meet Miss Nightingale," and Mr. Sackville was beaming upon him when his dresser entered with a letter.

"Came by the last post, Mr. Sackville, and marked 'Urgent'," he said officiously, "so they sent it up."

That dresser had the air of a prescriptive right to know the contents of Mr. Sackville's letter, and Adam himself was ashamed to feel curiosity about it. But Mr. Sackville having thanked his dresser sat gazing long and lovingly at the superscription, murmuring: "The arm . . ." and no more. Adam left him at it while he descended to the stage to play his scene, and it was not until the last interval that he saw Mr. Sackville yield to the urgency desired by the writer of this letter. Then he said in a strangled voice: "My God! the arm grows longer every day."

"God's arm?" Adam queried without great interest.

Mr. Sackville gravely shook his head. "Worse than that—the arm of coincidence." He waved his letter slowly to and fro with a melancholy gesture. "Miss Nightingale . . ." After some minutes he added: "You will, of course."

Adam knew Mr. Sackville's syntax sufficiently well by this time to supply the missing words for himself. He understood that this adorable woman desired for some unknown reason that he, Adam, should be brought to her. He was less flattered than Mr. Sackville deemed he ought to be, but more flattered than he felt inclined to admit. "Awfully good of her," he said offhand, "but you'll be much too busy."

Mr. Sackville sighed. "I am never too busy to

Lady Derrydown at Home

do what Pen . . . What Miss Jane Nightingale desires," he declared.

"Well," said Adam nonchalantly, "of course if you're free I shall be charmed to be taken to see any friend of yours. Is Miss Nightingale in London, or where?"

"In London," Mr. Sackville said, trying not to stress the information, "staying with Lady Derrydown at her town house in Eaton Place."

"Pimlico way?" said Adam, proud of his rapidly gained knowledge of the Metropolis.

"Belgravia," said Mr. Sackville, and added: "Have you a tall hat?" He seemed almost to hope that if Adam had no hat of any altitude, the Fates might yet be thwarted.

But Adam pointing to the one he wore as Ned Burke, Mr. Sackville's face fell. "I had . . ." said he, and said no more for the time. But at parting he made the appointment. "Sunday, three o'clock, at Sloane Square Station. Don't forget your hat. Not that Miss Nightingale would care, but Lady Derrydown is very particular. She was a Gaiety girl before the war, and you know how snobbish they can be."

This was the first Adam had heard of the snobbishness of the ladies of that theatre, but he nodded intelligently as if it had been a household word in the late Mr. Macfadden's apartments. A knowledgeable air still disguised his normally ingenuous countenance as he commented: "Odd that Miss Nightingale should be so fond of her."

Mr. Sackville frowned: "You are quite . . ." he said almost eagerly but without indicating whether he meant wrong or right; whichever it was, Adam felt that he resented the suggestion. He said good-night at the stage-door, turned rapidly away, and as rapidly retraced his footsteps, to add in a rather severe tone: "Miss Nightingale, as you will find out for yourself, is a very extraordinary

In London

woman, but please understand that there is nothing whatever unusual about her."

"That's what you might call an English bull," said Adam.

"Flippancy about Miss Nightingale I cannot tolerate," said Mr. Sackville.

Adam sobered at once. "I wasn't flippant about her," said he, "I never dreamt of such a thing, but you don't mind my being flippant about you, do you?"

And Mr. Sackville, good-humouredly shaking his head, answered: "Not at all," and admonishing him not to forget their appointment, bade him once more good-night.

That day closed with an Adam whose interest in life was doubly wakened. For was he not now to be a London actor and a gentleman received in the houses of the nobility. . . . But did England's nobility condescend to lodge in Eaton Place? . . . Some one had told him that Carson lived there. Surely no English nobleman . . . surely Miss Nightingale who looked the very soul of nobility! . . . But then Carson had lived in a very handsome house in Merrion Square, only a door or two from Plunkett House. . . . Fancy A. E. and Carson side by side! . . . Besides, the Derrydown peerage was Irish, and Irish peerages are not as good as other Irish things like butter and bacon. . . . Anyhow, it was very delicious to be lulled to sleep by the thought that whatever his father and mother might have been, Mr. Sackville saw he was a perfect gentleman and no end of an artist, and Lady Derrydown had asked him to come to tea. Once in the night he was startled from sleep by the fancy that as he entered Lady Derrydown's drawing-room her ladyship's eye called his attention to the fact that his tall hat was that of a schoolboy and not a man of the world.

When he met Mr. Sackville at Sloane Square Station he had the right sort of hat, and he flattered

Lady Derrydown at Home

himself, was well-nigh faultlessly attired, though not without misgiving that Mr. Macarthy might disagree with him. Anyhow, not Mr. Sackville nor yet his hostess found any fault with him. Miss Nightingale and the Countess were in what they called mufti, but a uniformed figure lounged in an armchair by the fire: the gray head and bowed back suggested to Adam a broken-down staff officer. He was startled to hear Lady Derrydown say: "You know my aunt, don't you?"

More startled was he still when the staff officer cried in a piercing voice: "My God, how like David!" and to find himself violently forced into a prostrate attitude in the lap of the Marchesa della Venasalvatica.

As he lay thus in his grandmother's lap, he could hear Mr. Sackville's cultured voice murmuring: "Ah, Miss Nightingale, this is indeed what dear old Haddon Chambers called in his exquisite play, *Captain Swift*—Tree did it at the Haymarket, you know, long before your time, but I had the privilege of walking on in it—the long arm of coincidence." To Lady Derrydown he said: "But a coincidence is always remarkable whether it's arms are long or short, don't you think?" and picking up the Marchesa's spectacles which had fallen on the floor, he regarded them with tears in his eyes, protesting: "I'm sure I don't know why, but this reminds me of *East Lynne*."

The Marchesa released Adam to say: "Don't be a damn fool! *East Lynne* is disgusting rubbish. I remember telling Mrs. Wood when I was a young girl, and she was already as old as Methuselah, that she ought to be ashamed to have written it."

"Perhaps you never saw it as a play," Mr. Sackville gently suggested. "I have only the privilege of knowing it as a play."

"I don't know it as anything beyond hearsay," the Marchesa snapped. "If you think I'd read an

In London

English novel or see an English play . . ." words failed her.

"I am not enough of a scholar," said Mr. Sackville deferentially, "to form an opinion about English novels, though there is always Dickens, isn't there, and they tell me Hall Caine is clever, but surely, in drama England is pre-eminent? Think of Goldsmith and Sheridan."

"Who is this man?" the Marchesa asked Adam, who piped up readily the information that he was Mr. Arthur Sackville, and one of his best and kindest friends.

The Marchesa's tone changed. "Sackville," said she, "is an unfortunate name."

"It is not really mine," the actor broke in hastily. "I have the privilege to be a Smith."

"That's better," said the Marchesa generously, "anything to Smith O'Brien?"

The actor hesitated. "I don't think so," he said reluctantly, "but of course one never knows."

"One doesn't," said the Marchesa. She sighed: "I know that from experience. What you said just now is quite true, Mr. Smith. I mean about the legs of coincidence."

Mr. Sackville said deferentially: "The phrase that dear old Haddon Chambers used, was the long arm of coincidence, meaning, I suppose, that it embraces widely separated things, but of course there's no reason why he should not have said leg."

The Marchesa tossed her head. "Do you suppose your Censor would have let him?"

"I don't follow you," Mr. Sackville said earnestly. "In America, I am told, well-bred people speak of the limbs of a table, but in England we are more robust."

"I don't care whether you're robust or not," the Marchesa said, "if you've been kind to little Adam here, that's enough for me, though I'm ashamed of him for deserting his country in the hour of need."

Lady Derrydown at Home

"Surely Mr. Quinn," said the actor, "is too young for the firing line?"

"Mr. Quinn?" the Marchesa echoed. "What Mr. Quinn?"

Adam apologetically explained that this was the name he was known by on the stage.

The Marchesa looked at him sternly, or rather with a sort of wild fierceness. "If you had been a real Quinn," she said, "you would have been with me on Easter Monday."

Mr. Sackville came to Adam's rescue. "Madam," he said, "you may not understand that we had two performances on Easter Monday, and it would have been impossible for Mr. Quinn to get away."

"Sir," said the Marchesa, "I have been an actress myself, and am thoroughly acquainted with the customs of the profession, but if you think that a man is justified in playing a silly part in an idiotic play when he ought to be fighting for his country..."

Mr. Sackville flung out protesting hands: "I am over age," he cried, "and my heart is weak. . . . I was in munitions until it gave me neuralgia."

"What is that to me?" said the Marchesa. "So far as I know you have no country worth fighting for, but this child here is an Irishman, and as an Irishman it was his duty to be fighting beside me on Easter Monday."

"You don't mean to say," cried Mr. Sackville.

"I do," cried the Marchesa. "I am a rebel with a price upon my head."

"But surely," said Mr. Sackville, "You have never actually..."

"I have," cried the Marchesa. Her voice shot up: "On Easter Monday, I pledge you my word, that I emptied revolver after revolver into the British phalanx advancing to arrest me, and although I am short-sighted, it seems impossible that all should have escaped."

Chapter Seventeen

HOW THE MARCHESA ESCAPED

MR. SACKVILLE gazed at the Marchesa petrified. At last he said, as one with difficulty collecting his thoughts: "This phalanx . . . you thought you saw . . . advancing to arrest you . . ."

"I didn't think I saw it," said the Marchesa.

Mr. Sackville looked relieved. "Pardon me. I thought you thought you saw it," he said.

"Don't be an idiot," snapped the Marchesa, "I saw it right enough, there was no time for thinking about it."

"I apologise," Mr. Sackville assured her, "but if this phalanx was, as you thought, going to arrest you, it must have been composed of police."

"That's all you know about it," said the Marchesa.

"But if it was going to arrest you, as I'm sure you thought it was," Mr. Sackville respectfully argued, "and you didn't kill or wound it, why didn't it arrest you?"

"That's just it," said the Marchesa, "that's what I think so unfair."

"Unfair?" Mr. Sackville echoed. "Not to arrest you was unfair?"

"Most unfair," said the Marchesa, "both to me and the dear boys who would have given their lives to defend me."

Mr. Sackville flung a despairing glance around the room. "Upon my word, I . . ." he said, and left it at that.

Adam came to the rescue. "Why didn't they arrest you?" he asked.

How the Marchesa Escaped

"Colonel Dixon was in command," said the Marchesa.

The Countess spoke for the first time. "Not Tommy Dixon?" said she. "Well, of course, he couldn't, could he?"

"He could, but he didn't," said the Marchesa.

"Old dear," murmured the Countess.

And now Miss Nightingale's beautiful voice broke in: "I'm awfully interested, but as much in the dark as Mr. Sackville. May I ask what really happened?"

The Countess anticipated the Marchesa's reply. "Janie, old love, don't you see, Tommy Dixon's no end of a flame of mine, and he couldn't decently go and do a thing like that."

Adam was thoroughly interested, and implored his grandmother to tell them what Dixon did.

This started the Marchesa on a somewhat baffling narrative from which Adam gathered that the gentleman called Dixon, apparently an officer of local importance, had persuaded the Marchesa to lay down her arms on condition of the Infant Druids being dismissed then and there without arrest. He had then placed her in charge of a junior officer with instructions to seek an early opportunity of allowing her to escape. This was easily effected by the Marchesa bringing him on a fairly plausible pretext to the Muses Club, going upstairs and not coming down again until he had grown tired and gone away. Mrs. Burns coming in to a committee meeting and finding her concealed in the dressing-room, had suggested changing clothes with her. Accordingly, while Mrs. Burns attended her committee in the uniform of the Arch-druid, the Marchesa had left the building attired as Mrs. Burns.

Mr. Sackville listened with the deepest interest. "Would it not have been safer to stay where you were?" he cried.

"Not at all," said the Marchesa. "I have one

In London

particularly bitter and unscrupulous enemy at the Castle who would certainly have told the police to look for me."

"Leaper-Carahar?" Adam asked.

"Yes," said the Marchesa dramatically. "Leaper Carahar! He would have stopped at nothing to have me hanged or shot."

"What a cruel man," said Mr. Sackville. "How pleased you must be to be safe from him over here."

The Marchesa tossed her head. "I was safe enough from him in Dublin until I got tired of hiding myself."

"Where did you hide?" Adam asked.

The Marchesa smiled at him. "Where do you think I would be safest?"

"At Mr. Macarthy's," said Adam readily.

"I knew a better place than that," said the Marchesa.

"If I were going to hide," Adam said, "I couldn't imagine a better place than Mr. Macarthy's bedroom."

"It depends who you were hiding from," said the Marchesa. "I'll tell you the best place to hide from Leaper-Carahar if you ever want to know, and that's the place where I hid."

By this time even Miss Nightingale was worked up to asking where the Marchesa hid, and she being now satisfied that her answer would have its full effect, said: "I hid in Mrs. Leaper-Carahar's bedroom."

"But didn't Mr. Leaper-Carahar . . ." said Mr. Sackville, the eyes jumping out of his head.

"No," said the Marchesa, "he didn't. He never has. She wouldn't let him. Barbara Burns—Mrs. Leaper-Carahar—is the grand-daughter of Sir David Byron-Quinn, not the sort of woman to tolerate a fellow like that in her bedroom."

"I thought," said Mr. Sackville, "that they were married."

How the Marchesa Escaped

"Yes," said the Marchesa drily, "I dare say he thought so too until she taught him to know better."

"It seems to me," said Mr. Sackville thoughtfully, but did not mention what.

Adam's curiosity was now thoroughly aroused. "Did you remain there long?" he asked.

"It seemed a long time to me," said the Marchesa, "for Barbara talked about nothing but herself and sometimes you and Stephen Macarthy."

"About Stephen Macarthy?" Miss Nightingale asked.

"Yes," said the Marchesa, "Barbara always had an absurd passion for him, just as Adam here has for her."

"I haven't," cried Adam, "certainly not now she's married."

"Pooh!" said the Marchesa, "that isn't a marriage, I'd hardly even call it a *mariage blanc*."

Miss Nightingale's voice chimed in again. "And how did you escape from there?"

"Oh, there was no difficulty whatever in that," the Marchesa said. "I just left when I thought fit in this uniform of Leaper-Carahar's. He was in the Methuseleers."

"The Methuseleers?" Mr. Sackville deferentially asked. "Is that an Irish regiment?"

"An Irish regiment! God forbid!" said the Marchesa. "It's a sort of volunteer corps made up of Castle officials and some old fogies who ought to know better."

"I see," said Mr. Sackville brightly, "and they are called, no doubt, after their commander? Some such name as Methuen?"

"They're called after Methuselah," said the Marchesa.

Mr. Sackville sighed: "I'm afraid I'm a little out of my depth. . . . Biblical scholarship is not . . ."

Miss Nightingale spoke again. "I must say you

In London

are a courageous woman to beard the lion in his den and then go off disguised in his skin."

"I suppose you mean I'm an ass?" said the Marchesa sharply.

"You are too quick," Miss Nightingale replied, "if I thought it I did not mean to say it."

"That's straight," said the Marchesa good-humouredly, "and very few women are straight."

"They compare favourably with men," said Miss Nightingale.

"Hear, hear!" cried the Countess, "I think men are damned rotters."

"I protest," said Mr. Sackville. "We may not be as straight as ladies, but we are less crooked than the . . ."

"Than the what?" snapped the Marchesa.

"The inferior animals generally," said Mr. Sackville. "The . . . the . . . jackal and, perhaps some one would correct me if I'm wrong in saying, the lynx. On the other hand, of course, the elephant is . . ."

"How do you know?" said the Marchesa.

"I have always heard the elephant well spoken of," Mr. Sackville said temperately.

"Irish elephants, I know, are all right," the Marchesa admitted, "but if you're to believe Rudyard Kipling, all the Indian elephants are traitors to their country. I'd rather be a woman, but most of all I'd like to be an Irishman like Jim Connolly."

Adam broke in impulsively: "So should I."

"Then why did you run away like a little coward?" said the Marchesa.

Adam was now on the verge of tears. "I shouldn't have run away if I'd been in Dublin on Easter Monday," he said.

Again Miss Nightingale broke in. "We still don't know what happened after you left Mrs. Carahar's house wearing her husband's uniform."

The Marchesa smiled with an expression that

How the Marchesa Escaped

Adam never remembered to have seen on her face before. "A great deal happened after I left Mr. Leaper-Carahar's house."

Mr. Sackville murmured sympathetically: "It must have been an extraordinary experience for a lady to be walking the streets of a great city in . . . I suppose you wore trousers?"

"You don't suppose Leaper-Carahar wore skirts," growled the Marchesa.

Said Miss Nightingale: "I wonder that you were not recognised."

"You needn't wonder about that," said the Marchesa, "I was spotted again and again."

"And yet here you are," Mr. Sackville almost chirped; "it's a delightfully fascinating story."

The Marchesa looked at him grimly: "I wonder if you'd say that if you knew the whole of it?"

Said the Countess: "Tell him and see."

Mr. Sackville shook his head. "Pray don't tell me anything it might distress me to hear."

The Marchesa looked at him mockingly. "I wonder if it would distress you to hear what I did after I left that house where I had been hiding?"

"If it was anything violent," said Mr. Sackville, "particularly anything unladylike . . ."

"It was very unladylike in one way," said the Marchesa, "for it forced me to visit a brothel," she waited, as it were, with an air of challenge for Mr. Sackville to be horrified.

But Mr. Sackville's expression became almost beatific. "Ah, no," he said, "my nerves may be weak, but believe me I am not prudish. My dear mother herself has always taken a lively interest in such work."

It was the Marchesa's turn to be shocked. "Such work?" she repeated, "your mother?"

"Yes," said Mr. Sackville, "only not in England. Rescue work in India, missions to the Zenanas—I still subscribe."

In London

"My rescue work was not quite like that," said the Marchesa. "The Zenana my mission brought me to was kept by a traitor."

"Terrible," said Mr. Sackville, "and how immensely brave of you. Was the man a German?"

"No," said the Marchesa, "he was an Irishman."

"But in German pay," said Mr. Sackville.

"In British pay," said the Marchesa.

Mr. Sackville smiled with sweet feebleness. "I'm very stupid about following you," he said. "Now what exactly do you mean?"

"I mean," said the Marchesa, looking at him rather hard, "that this accursed scoundrel was a creature of Leaper-Carahar's who seduced youngsters of mine to his den that his harpies might find out our secrets."

Mr. Sackville wiped his brow. "It sounds perfectly awful," he said, "though my mind is so confused about it that I really don't know what to say."

Said the Countess: "I hope you dealt with the stinker?"

Mr. Sackville protested: "It's so difficult to deal with a case like that. Of course the police . . ."

"Of course not," said the Marchesa.

Miss Nightingale came and stood beside Adam and looked with strong yet placid eyes at the Marchesa. "I think I can imagine what you did," said she. "You can trust Mr. Sackville not to betray it."

"I don't care a damn whether he betrays it or not," said the Marchesa. "I blew the scoundrel and his house to hell."

Adam's brain caught fire, but he was conscious of Miss Nightingale's fingers patting soothingly his shoulder.

Chapter Eighteen

MORE COMPANY FOR SIR DAVID

ADAM'S brain burned. It seemed to him that there was a long and intolerable pause in which every one except the Marchesa was staring at him. Then, as it were, with a splash in that sea of silence, fell the voice of Mr. Sackville in the polite tone of one who feels it to be his duty to say something. More respectfully than ever he addressed the Marchesa : " I cannot tell you what a privilege it is that you should give me your confidence with regard to this . . . this . . . as it were, peccadillo that you have just mentioned. . . . I feel it very deeply, and I am sure that Mr. Quinn here will understand as readily as I do why it must go no farther. But at the same time I feel it is my duty to point out that what you did was not merely unladylike, as my mother in her perhaps old-fashioned way of thinking would say, but speaking in the name of our common humanity, and although a conservative in politics, I claim to be not altogether inhumane, it seems to me that to blow up a house for whatever reason, and however noble a motive, is . . . "

He looked round appealingly to Miss Nightingale.

" I wish I'd blown up the whole street," said the Marchesa in a voice of challenge.

Mr. Sackville chivalrously answered : " This ungentle mood will pass."

The Marchesa rose from her chair, not without difficulty, and with the movement of a perambulating scarecrow, made the best of her way to Mr. Sackville,

In London

who suppressed a shrinking visible to all but her as she approached him. Placing her bony right hand under his chin she gazed into his eyes and said: "From your talk I thought you were a boy of Adam's age, but I see you're getting on. Anyhow, you're a dear, gentle creature, and I'm sure Adam has found a good friend. This is your reward for being kind to him," and her lipless mouth descended in a romantically maternal fashion somewhere between the nose and chin of Mr. Sackville.

His eyes filled with tears as he wrung the Marchesa's hand and murmured: "I shall never forget this, never, but I shall never mention it; you may rely upon my . . ."

The Marchesa returned to her place by the fire and Mr. Sackville's experience as an actor indicated to him that he would do well now to take his leave. A glance of interrogation from Adam to Miss Nightingale admonished him to leave his young friend behind. So, with some speeches of courtesy and the hope that the Marchesa would not distress her friends by running such risks, he was gone. No sooner had the hall-door closed behind him, than on some murmured excuse Lady Derrydown and Miss Nightingale also withdrew, and Adam found himself alone with his grandmother. His brain cooled as he gazed at her. Critically he considered her with the unsentimental detachment of a child of his time. In the old woman's wild stare he read that she knew something but not all that he knew. He saw that she knew he was descended from David Byron-Quinn, but not that the descent was through her. And certainly she did not know that the man whom she boasted of having blown to hell was her own son and Adam's father. He wondered if he ought to tell her: he believed that he ought to tell her, but the words would not come. They sat a long time in silence, then at last she said in a calm and cultured voice,

More Company for Sir David

such as he had seldom heard her use : " You know you are here because I sent for you ? "

" I didn't know it until I came," said Adam.

" You know now," said the Marchesa, and as Adam nodded she went on : " Why do you suppose I sent for you ? "

" Is it about the Infant Druids ? " he hazarded.

" No," said the Marchesa, " whatever I may say in front of other people, I tell you now I am very glad you were not there on Easter Monday. When I see you now the living image of the man I loved . . . and love . . . the thought that you might have been shot down beside me is unbearable." She put out her arms entreatingly : " I love you, Adam, as I would have loved my own son if he had not been taken from me. . . ." Seeing that Adam made no movement in response she went on : " Is it because I'm growing old and perhaps ugly. . . . I could see that actor fellow thought me no longer beautiful. . . . Is that why you won't come to me ? It's enough to make your grandfather turn in his grave." She made another motion with her arms, in pitiful yet disdainful appeal.

But Adam only said : " You know who my grandfather was ? "

" I saw it from the first glance," she answered. " You're the living image of him, even more than your father."

Adam recoiled : " Then you did know my father . . . who he was ? " he cried.

" Do you think I could be such a fool as to doubt it," she answered. " But Stephen, with his old-fashioned notion of chivalry, told me a lie about it."

Adam broke in : " If you mean Mr. Stephen Macarthy, he couldn't tell you a lie if he tried. It's the one thing in the world I don't believe he could do, no matter how hard he tried." He panted with resentment as he flung the words at her.

But the Marchesa seemed only pleased by them :

In London

"Bravo!" she cried. "It's a good thing to hear a boy speak for his father nowadays."

"I'm not speaking for my father," Adam retorted, "I only wish I could. . . . I'm speaking of Mr. Macarthy, who has been more to me than any father ever was. . . ."

"I know," she interrupted, "you think your father was Macfadden, the tailor. . . . But I give you my word he was not. . . . Your father was Stephen Macarthy as sure as Stephen was David Byron-Quinn's son."

This time Adam was taken by surprise: "I never knew that," he stuttered.

"No," the Marchesa answered triumphantly, "I thought not. But I tell you that your father was a gentleman and his father before him. You've nothing to be ashamed of, Adam, any more than I. . . . I'm as proud of your father, though he's a trimmer in politics . . . as if he were my own son."

Adam hesitated a moment and then said in a low voice: "Perhaps you'll not be so proud to hear that my real father was your son."

The Marchesa stared at him incredulously: "What nonsense are you talking? I tell you Stephen Macarthy was your father. . . . Who your mother was I don't know; for it was not like Stephen. . . ."

"Never mind about that," Adam said: "The point is that he was not my father."

The Marchesa laughed scornfully. "Allow me to know who your father was. I suppose rather than admit you were born out of wedlock you wish to pose as the son of a drunken tailor?"

Adam with an effort kept his voice low and even: "Shall I allow you to know who my father was?" And, as she answered only with a laugh, let the words escape him: "He was the man you blew up in Pleasant Street."

More Company for Sir David

The Marchesa half rose from her place. "The what?" she screamed.

Adam let her have it: "Mr. Byron O'Toole of 7 Pleasant Street, your son by Sir David Byron-Quinn."

Pulling herself together the Marchesa lowered her scarecrow figure into her chair. "Rubbish!" she snorted, "I don't believe a word of it."

"I believe it," said Adam.

"This is perverse," said the Marchesa, "perverse of you, to wish to be the son of a scoundrel like O'Toole rather than a gentleman like Stephen Macarthy."

"I don't wish it," said Adam, "it was Mr. Macarthy himself who taught me to face facts."

"I never did it," said the Marchesa, "and I never will. . . No artist attaches any importance to facts."

"Then if you're an artist," said Adam, "why did you blow up 7 Pleasant Street? That was a fact, wasn't it?"

"It may have been a fact from your point of view, which seems to be that of the police, but from my point of view it was simply the most beautiful gesture in my career." Her eyes glowed with lunatic plausibility.

"I agree," said Adam, "that it was a more beautiful gesture to send my father out of the world than to bring him into it."

The Marchesa laughed. "What did that actor fellow say about coincidence?"

Adam almost smiled as he answered: "I don't remember, but he's very fond of talking about the long arm of coincidence."

"If what you say is true," said the Marchesa, "I mean if this canaille O'Toole was really my son, and in the world of facts I suppose it's possible, then the arm of coincidence is longer even than your friend thinks; for the house which I blew to

In London

pieces with him and his horrible company, was, I could almost swear to it, the house in which David and I . . ." she broke off suddenly. "You're very young for me to be talking to you about these things. I never discuss them with my dear boys." Her voice sank very low and her hand trembled as it appeared to play with the buttons of her tunic: "To think," she said, "to think . . ."

"I am very young," Adam said, "but I'm old enough to think that the one boy who might have been dear to you, who ought to have been dear to you, was my father whom you blew to hell. Not this year, mind you, but I suppose nearly fifty years ago."

The Marchesa rose and flung herself at his feet. "Upon your honour," she demanded, "do you believe that Byron O'Toole was my son?"

Adam looked her full in the face. "Yes," he said, "I believe that the Dublin police know it for a fact."

"I see," said the Marchesa lightly, and springing up with a recrudescence of youth she turned away. She seemed to move quite idly to the window, then he noticed she had the attitude of one listening, and he heard a telephone bell ring somewhere in the house. The Marchesa was still standing by the window fumbling with her button-holes as the Countess burst into the room. "Daphne, dear," she cried, "I'm afraid you'll have to go."

"Go where?" asked the Marchesa with an air of indifference.

"Anywhere you like, old dear," the Countess answered, "but you can't stop here. Derrydown's just rung up from the club that O'Hagan-Bathe tells him that Scotland Yard believes you're in this house, and are going to act. Of course I don't care a damn, but it's an awkward moment for an Irish peer to be compromised."

"I see," said the Marchesa in a low voice.

More Company for Sir David

"And you will go, won't you, old dear?"

"I suppose I may as well," said the Marchesa with a very rational air.

The Countess flung her arms round her. "You are an old sport," she cried, "and it does seem such a shame," but she disengaged her to add anxiously: "You will go soon, won't you?"

"I'll go now," said the Marchesa, opening the window to look out.

"Do you want a taxi?" her hostess said, "if so I'll ring for one, and while it's coming you can change."

"Oh, there's no need to change," said the Marchesa without turning her head.

"But you can't go into the street like that," the Countess protested.

"Why not?" the Marchesa queried; "what could be easier?"

"It isn't done," the Countess said, "every one would know who you are."

"That's what I've always aimed at," said the Marchesa. "I wanted every one to know who I was, and I tell you they shall. I shall be remembered for ever and ever."

On the last word there was a flash and report and her body fell through the window and disappeared.

The door opened to admit Miss Nightingale, who said in her tranquil voice: "Is anything the matter?"

For answer came a shriek and a thud. Adam shrank into his seat, covering his face with his hands.

"Daphne's gone and killed herself," said the Countess. "I call it perfectly insane and damned inconsiderate."

Chapter Nineteen

ADAM PROSPERS

Now that the Great Push was ending in the air, the newspapers found it worth while to make much of the death of the Marchesa della Venasalvatica. If not fated to be remembered for ever, she had the considerable honour of supplying the press with a rather more than nine days' wonder, and her glory reflected on Adam who, somehow or other, came to be spoken of as her grandson. Mr. Onsin found it worth while to advance his salary to ten guineas a week. Revolutionaries cheered him on the strength of his connection with Sinn Fein: the Conservatives showed themselves scarcely less appreciative of his connection with the peerage: it all helped to advance him in his career.

To the casual observer passing down Eaton Place that Sunday afternoon, it might have seemed that the Marchesa had committed suicide. And that was Adam's impression, and he thought also, from what she said, the impression of the Countess of Derrydown. Indeed he wrote to Mr. Macarthy that very night in the most positive terms that it was so. Fortunately, however, for every one concerned, counsel representing the relatives at the inquest had no difficulty in proving that nothing was farther from the deceased lady's mind. It appeared that she was an impulsive lady, and on hearing that the police had run her down on a purely political charge, reflecting in no way on her private character, she had sought to escape through the window, and her revolver, a very modern and

Adam Prospers

dangerous weapon, happening to be in her hand, had accidentally gone off with fatal results. . . . As no charge had been proved against her the body was handed over to her relatives, and as she was wearing uniform at the time, the War Office chivalrously decided to give her a military funeral. This took place at the family burial ground, which to Adam's surprise was in the west of Ireland and not in the south, as he had supposed, and for recruiting purposes the firing-party was made up of Irish Guardsmen sent at considerable expense from their depôt in England. This money was, however, not entirely thrown away, for one of her boy Druids subsequently offered himself for enlistment in that regiment but was rejected on the ground of his name being William O'Brien. He was, however, suffered to transfer his services to the Middlesex regiment, where he rapidly rose to the command of a battalion.

Meanwhile Adam grew fat in peace, and being now prosperous, as the spring approached he felt arise within him a fresh sentiment for Barbara Burns. He had not been so much impressed by his grandmother's death as by two of the assertions she had made in her last hour. Firstly, that Mr. Macarthy was the connecting link between him and her long-dead lover, Sir David Byron-Quinn. He could not help wishing that this were true. He tried to persuade himself that it was true and then hated himself for his meanness in thinking Mr. Macarthy capable of deserting a woman and child. On the other hand he remembered the money that had so mysteriously been paid through Father Muldoon for his upbringing. Then again to suspect Mr. Macarthy of knowing more about this than he admitted was to make Mr. Macarthy out something that he most certainly was not. Not so long ago Mr. Macarthy had definitely said that he wished he were his father, and as definitely confirmed his own

In London

belief that his father was Byron O'Toole, the son of Sir David Byron-Quinn by the Marchesa, and flung by her to the wolves at the compulsion of her pious mother, the present Lord Derrydown's grandmother. No, he could not be the son of Mr. Macarthy. There was no escaping from the fact that O'Toole was his father, and the wife of Macfadden the tailor his mother. He could only thank God that both were dead and no one was likely now to question his right to call himself by his grandfather's name. To himself now he was and would be so long as he lived, Adam Quinn. Already that name was placarded over London; already portraits of him under that name had found their way into the illustrated papers that helped to boom *What Rot!* and no illustrated paper lost its chance of joining in that boom. Again and again he was referred to in such phrases as: "This brilliant light of the Abbey Theatre, who has transferred his effulgence to London." . . . Yes, Adam Macfadden, the child of that disgraceful couple, Byron O'Toole and Bride Macfadden, was dead and buried in their grave, his soul transmigrated to Adam Quinn, the grandson of that hero of romance, Sir David Byron-Quinn and his flamboyant love, the Marchesa della Venasalvatica, once Lady Daphne Page. It was easy to obscure the sordidness of his parents by keeping so far as possible in the reflected light of his forebears.

What surprised him more was the Marchesa's allegation that Mr. Macarthy was the son of Sir David. Such an idea had never entered his mind, and he felt convinced that if true, Mr. Macarthy was unaware of it. Often Mr. Macarthy had spoken of his father and always with affection though not always with approval. Adam visualised him as a straightforward gentleman who aimed at virtue with an inadequate intellectual equipment. He remembered to have been told, not by Mr. Macarthy,

that his mother had died in giving him birth, and the responsibility of his upbringing had fallen exclusively on his father, who had not married again. Adam had an impression of a man rigidly faithful to the memory of his first wife and finding relief from his sorrow for her partly in his work at the Bar and partly in his care for his son. Mrs. Macarthy was not to be seen by him at all. He knew only that she came from Cork and was some connection of Sir David's, but that hardly added to the probability of her being his mistress. The more he considered it, the more did he come to the conclusion that the Marchesa's chatter on that fatal Sunday was that of a crazy old woman reeling to self-destruction.

Less willing was he to dismiss from his mind what she had said about Barbara Leaper-Carahar. There was too great a food for pleasure in the thought that she was that abominable fellow's wife in no more than name. If the Marchesa could hide safely in her bedroom then it was clear that all relations between them had ceased, and the Marchesa boldly proclaimed that they had never existed. Adam hugged the thought that they had never existed . . . that after all Barbara was for him. . . . It was easy to forget that she was several years older and always pooh-poohed his love-making when it threatened to grow serious. . . . He made up his mind to write to Mr. Macarthy and ask him if he thought it possible . . . but the letter was never written though the idea was not abandoned. He thought he might wait until Mr. Macarthy came to town again. But Mr. Macarthy did not come. . . . The spring warmed to summer and there was nothing done.

Adam grew fat, there was no mistake about it. Englishmen complained of their rations and grew thin, but Irishmen grow fat on rations insufficient for their plumper neighbours. To say that Adam

In London

grew fat does not mean that he grew as fat as an Englishman. It only means that he grew plumper and more juvenile in appearance than he had been on his arrival in the metropolis eighteen months ago. Now that he was an orphan he was at liberty to enjoy that childhood his parents had denied him. There was no longer any question of Miss Blake coming back to take up her old part in *What Rot!* Despite his attachment for Miss Blake, Mr. Onsin recognised that to give her back the part would not have been good business. So at eighteen years of age Adam found himself enjoying an income of over five hundred a year, agreeably earned, and with no likelihood of being threatened so long as he kept his health and his youthful appearance, which so far had protected him from the recruiting authorities. Miss Durward saw to it that he was not registered and yet was better fed than if he had been. . . . It was perhaps a mere coincidence that she procured lingerie on really very reasonable terms for the dearest friend of a high official in the Home Office. It is only on the Continent or west of the Atlantic that officials lay themselves open to suspicion.

Mr. Sackville, once again playing Lord Algy in the suburbs, spent a Sunday with him up the river. Adam picked him up at West Kensington Station, whence they trained to Richmond and on by 'bus to Kingston, where they lunched by the waterside and then embarked in an outrigger which Mr. Sackville proposed to scull up to somewhere above Hampton Court. He placed Adam in the stern sheets, the tiller ropes in his hand. Adam did not mention that this was his first acquaintance with the duties of a coxswain. They enjoyed themselves very much until somehow or other the boat turned turtle.

"I thought . . ." said Mr. Sackville reproachfully, before his head disappeared beneath the

surface of the water. Fortunately he was rescued, though not by Adam, who was so terrified at the idea of being drowned that it was with difficulty he rescued himself. He was relieved to know that his companion was safe, and perhaps only a little less relieved to be told that he was too unwell to see any one, being much exhausted by the efforts used to restore him by some V.A.D. ladies who had witnessed the accident. Adam did not feel equal to any further conversation with Mr. Sackville that day. It had come to him suddenly that success, with its consequent ease of life, had turned him into a self-satisfied poltroon. Mr. Sackville breathed no word of censure, being indeed fully rewarded for his pains and the risks he had run by the opportunity it gave him of publishing his latest photographs, of which the papers had recently been unwilling to make use. It was not his fault that he was represented as having swam ashore with Adam on his back and then returned to the water in a quixotic effort to rescue a packet of biscuits which he felt should not be wasted in war time. Adam was not blind to the humours of Mr. Sackville's advertised heroism, but he was scarcely less awake to the sorry figure he himself had cut in the adventure, and he blushed to find his own portrait appended as extra illustrative matter to those of his friend. He was terrified to know what Mr. Macarthy would say of it. Mr. Macarthy said nothing.

On the other hand it brought him a letter with an envelope addressed in writing that was beautiful and thrilling. Where had he seen it before? Where seen such an envelope, unusually dainty for war-time, and yet sufficiently sober and businesslike? Had such an envelope even been addressed to him before? If not, why was he so familiar with it? Why did he have the impression of passing an evening in its company? He sat a long time in his

In London

dressings-room contemplating that envelope, deliciously wondering what exquisite message it might contain. Then, suddenly remembering how absurd he thought Mr. Sackville for doing the same thing, he opened it and without surprise saw that it came from Miss Nightingale.

It appeared that she had left London, returning to her duties at Eastbourne immediately after the death of the Marchesa, but now she was returned, so far as she could foresee, permanently to town, and would be at her own flat in Westminster, where she hoped Adam would come to see her. That was all, but a postscript asked him the flattering question: "Why do you, who have so much influence over our friend Mr. Sackville, allow him to make himself so ridiculous?"

To be flattered by Miss Nightingale was indeed a temptation, but Adam resisted it. "The accident up the river was all my fault," he wrote; "I made no end of an ass of myself and then lost my head, and Sackville was nearly drowned, but he never rounded on me though I richly deserved it. If you still want me to come to tea after this confession, I'll come, but please ring me up and say so, Paddington . . ." He gave Miss Durward's number.

The next day Miss Nightingale rang him up saying: "Come, of course," and the following Sunday he went, taking a number sixteen 'bus from the corner of Praed Street to Victoria. He found that Miss Nightingale's flat was at the top of a block looking towards Westminster Cathedral.

As Adam stood on the doormat he wondered what the interior would be like. As Miss Nightingale was a great friend of Lady Derrydown it seemed reasonable to suppose that her drawing-room would in some measure resemble the Countess's. That was a very handsomely furnished apartment, though in a style Adam thought might not have appealed to Mr. Macarthy, nor was he quite satisfied

with it himself, except for the chairs, which were as comfortable saddle-bags as he had ever sat in. The walls had been covered with some sort of velvet, richly red ; against them hung paintings in large gold frames ; some of these he thought might be good, but that in the place of honour over the mantelpiece seemed of dubious value. It represented a sylph-like lady with scarlet lips and less than no clothes offering a realistically painted champagne glass to the first comer. This interesting work of art was entitled, if one might rely upon the authority of the frame-maker, "A Toi." Adam wondered, even at the moment while he was listening to his grandmother's last speech, whether it was his lordship's taste or her ladyship's, or whose. He knew that with all her faults his grandmother would not have tolerated it in any room of hers. . . . Miss Nightingale's door opened.

Chapter Twenty

IN THE SHADOW OF WESTMINSTER CATHEDRAL

MISS NIGHTINGALE'S flat as little resembled Lady Derrydown's house as her face and figure resembled her ladyship's. There was no bright colour in her drawing-room: on that summer afternoon, coming from the dusty streets of Pimlico, Adam found it deliciously cool in its neutrality of tone: so far as there was any distinct note it was of silvery gray, the key set by Miss Nightingale's hair: her pictures were etchings or faded prints: her considerable library was clad in buff parchment or buckram: the very roses on her tea-table, poised elegantly in a blue-gray glass vase over the white egg-shell china and silver, were paler than seemed to him credible: "Are they artificial?" he asked.

His ingenuousness was without offence, yet Miss Nightingale's cheeks forthwith gave her room the glow that he thought it wanted. "How could you think me capable of such a thing?" she murmured. "Has Mr. Macarthy never told you that artificial flowers, at all events as a decoration in a room, are the last word in bad taste?"

Adam looked into the saucer-like blue eyes to which the momentarily pink cheeks gave a flash of brilliancy. "You don't mean to say you know Mr. Macarthy?" said he.

Miss Nightingale's indignation melted into a smile. "Why should I not know him?" she returned. "As a matter of fact I suppose I must have known him before you were born."

"Oh!" Adam grunted, this conjuring up of the

In the Shadow of Westminster Cathedral

remote past giving him food for thought. "If you know him as long as that," said he, "do you happen to know who his father was?"

Miss Nightingale's colour deepened, and she had the effect of recoiling without definite movement. Then she said in an even voice: "You want to know about his father? He was a barrister. Chiefly, I should say, on the equity side, though in Ireland I understand most barristers practice on both sides. Anyhow, from what Stephen tells me I gather his reputation was won as what they call a black letter lawyer."

The new phrase tickled Adam, "What sort of a lawyer is that?" he asked.

Miss Nightingale smiled again. "I'm not sure that I know, but I should think it must mean an authority on the older statutes, wouldn't you?"

"I suppose I would," said Adam, admiring equally the erudition of his hostess and her skill in turning his question. But his spirit was too genuinely inquiring to accept a first defeat. "I knew that the gentleman who brought him up as if he were his father was a barrister," he said. "But I sometimes, thought perhaps that he was an adopted son."

Miss Nightingale's voice chilled to the colour of her room. "He never mentioned to me that he was an adopted child. In fact I feel quite sure that he was not."

Adam expected her to ask him how he came by such a notion, but she refrained from doing so, and thus frustrated his attempt to break her line of defence at this point. But the drums of his brain beat fast to a fresh assault. "And, of course, he'd have something better to talk about than to tell you who my father was?"

His hostess looked at him so directly as to rouse a misgiving that she was about to bid him stand in the corner, but after a breath sufficient to allow this impression to sink in, she smiled almost

In London

flatteringly as she replied: "Mr. Macarthy has often spoken of you. I think he has told me as much about you as he was sure you would wish me to know, but my intuition tells me that you would like to tell me more about yourself."

Adam was so disarmed that he answered with a perceptible brogue: "Ah, sure I never did anything worth talking about."

Miss Nightingale's smile did not relinquish its place upon her countenance as she pointed out: "You're very young to have done anything at all, and really it seems to me you've done wonders on the stage."

"I haven't done badly and that's a fact," Adam acquiesced. "It's not every Dublin boy of my age that's making five hundred a year."

It was obvious from the changed expression on Miss Nightingale's face that had she not been so perfectly well-bred she would have gaped with astonishment. Her voice betrayed her a little as she repeated: "Five hundred a year? What waste of money!"

Adam was hurt by this sentence and asked her if she really thought so.

"Well, frankly, isn't it waste to pay anybody five hundred a year for acting in such a play?" She strengthened her appeal by winningly appending: "And, of course, it's still worse waste of talent for you to play in it."

Adam's eyes moistened. "There's something in that," he murmured, and felt quite sorry for himself. His accent grew more English in its note of appeal: "I've got to work for my living."

He found Miss Nightingale's tone less sympathetic as she replied: "You feel that you are working for your living? I had an impression that was not absolutely necessary."

Adam tossed his head. "There is a bagatelle besides . . ."

In the Shadow of Westminster Cathedral

"I beg your pardon?" said Miss Nightingale.

Adam suddenly felt that he wished he had never seen her, but a smile won him back to her. "Mr. Macarthy may have told you," said he, "that I have a little money sent to me by some one, but it's not near enough to keep me . . ." He would have corrected himself, but his hostess delicately anticipated the effort.

"You find it not nearly enough to keep you?" she said.

"Not nearly enough," Adam repeated. "London, he explained, "is more expensive than Dublin, and, of course, besides, when a fellow's grown up he wants all the money he can get."

"We all of us want all the money we can get, but we don't all get it," said Miss Nightingale with what seemed to Adam a faint echo of Mr. Macarthy's manner, but he at once detected the lacuna in her argument.

It was his turn to be schoolmaster, and he took it. "We all get what we can get," he pointed out.

It was disappointing to hear Miss Nightingale say: "Do we? I think not," and he realised that perhaps his repartee had missed fire.

"I meant to say we all can get what we get," he said.

"Obviously," Miss Nightingale agreed, "what of it?"

Again Adam felt that his affection for her was diminishing, but he could not help liking the look of her. "I've forgotten what we were talking about," he said simply.

Once more Miss Nightingale smiled benignly. "If you do that at your age," said she, "what will you do at mine?"

"Come," Adam answered chivalrously, "you're not so old as all that!"

"All what?" queried Miss Nightingale; a singularly baffling question.

In London

Adam smiled broadly in her face. "You remind me of Mr. Macarthy."

"And you remind me of Mr. Macarthy," she said, and added hastily: "And, of course, all sorts of other people."

Here Adam again saw a chance to score. "What sorts of other people?"

Miss Nightingale laughed outright, and so failed to score before Adam thought of another effective blow, which he put in just in time. "I can't imagine any one like Mr. Macarthy being like any one else."

His hostess looked at him this time with unmistakable admiration. "You really are a clever child," she said.

Adam was too pleased with the adjective to quarrel with the noun. "My grandfather," said he, "was a very intellectual man."

Miss Nightingale instantly sobered. "It seems a pity that you did not take up a more intellectual profession."

Adam crossed his legs with the air of a man of the world. "Well, my grandfather's profession wasn't very intellectual, you know. . . ." He made a great effort: "He was just a *beau sabreur*."

"A what?" asked Miss Nightingale.

For this question Adam was quite unprepared, and he was not unconscious of the lameness of his reply as he said: "The French for a beautiful swordsman."

"How interesting," Miss Nightingale declared with dubious innocence. "I fence a little myself. Do you?"

"Not much," said Adam. "Mr. Sackville and I went in for it a little." Mr. Sackville, who did well everything connected with his profession, had in fact given him a lesson, and would have given him more had not Adam found it dull to be poked by his friend without succeeding in poking him, for even when the elder actor's amiability had frequently

In the Shadow of Westminster Cathedral

thrown him off his guard, Adam had failed to notice it. He added thoughtfully: "I like Mr. Sackville."

Miss Nightingale seemed almost to resent the note of patronage in the last words. "Mr. Sackville is a very lovable man," she said.

"I suppose he is," said Adam judicially, "but I couldn't feel for him as I do for Mr. Macarthy; could you?"

Miss Nightingale rose to press the bell before she answered: "I suppose they are different in some ways."

Adam was annoyed at the notion of Mr. Sackville being put on a parity with his guardian. "Sackville's a jolly nice actor," he said, "and a jolly nice fellow, but there's nothing in him, is there?"

Miss Nightingale hesitated. "It's hardly for a woman to say whether there's anything in a man or not unless she really knows him very well indeed."

"But you must know Arthur Sackville through and through," said Adam. "He simply worships the ground you walk upon."

His hostess frowned. "Please don't say such ridiculous things to me. Mr. Sackville may be a little sentimental about me, but that's only because he's the sort of man who was born full of sentiment and must find somebody to spend it on."

"Anyhow, he wanted to marry you," Adam insisted.

"We'll not discuss that," said Miss Nightingale icily.

Adam bowed with an air of perfect obedience. "I suppose Mr. Macarthy never did a thing like that?" he said.

For a moment Miss Nightingale's brows were thunderously angry, then her whole face, as it were, exploded in laughter, and she hid it in her hands. "You're a dreadful child," she cried, "perfectly dreadful!"

"I'm awfully sorry," said Adam, "if I've been

In London

rude. I assure you I didn't mean it. But I am most awfully interested in what they call . . .” He tried to think of the word “psycho-analysis,” but couldn't, blurting out instead: “Physical affinity.”

Miss Nightingale's eyes slowly appeared between her fingers, and her tone was deliberate as she said: “You and I would get on better, I imagine, if you troubled to think what you were going to say before you said it.”

It seemed to Adam that he felt the blood in his toes creeping up his legs and body until it reached his brain where, finding it could go no farther, it bubbled him into dumbness: it added to his confusion to know that he looked as if some such accident had befallen his circulation. He found himself staring at his wrist-watch, and without gaining the smallest information from his study of it, murmured in a voice he did not recognise as his own that he had no idea it was so late.

“I suppose it is getting rather late,” said Miss Nightingale. “You see, you've kept me so interested that, like yourself, I forgot about the time.”

Adam pouted at her reproachfully. “And yet you say we don't get on?”

With curved lips she answered: “I said nothing of the kind. I threw out a flattering hint how we might get on yet better.”

“Oh,” said Adam, and they faced each other with latent mockery: she determined to keep him in his place, he recoiling to leap from it. He felt that she lived in a world whose air he could not breathe, but he longed to skim its surface in leaps and bounds, partly for the pleasure of it and partly from curiosity. One thirst he felt he must satisfy before he went: he sought his end subtly. “What do you think of Mrs. Onsin?” he asked.

“Who is that?” queried Miss Nightingale.

“I believe she is Mr. Onsin's wife,” said Adam.

In the Shadow of Westminster Cathedral

Miss Nightingale brushed beautiful fingers across her forehead. "Oh! a person called Isabelle Something, you mean? I've only seen her once and I don't remember anything about her except that she was disgustingly vulgar, like everything else in the play, except poor dear Arthur Sackville. He can't be vulgar even when it's necessary."

Adam looked at her roguishly: "I think I know, all the same," said he, "that you rather fancied Oswald Onsin himself."

"If I did," she said thoughtfully, "I must have fancied that he was even worse than his wife."

Chapter Twenty-One

THE PROBLEM OF MARRIAGE

WITH temperate cordiality Miss Nightingale bade Adam farewell at the door of her flat. "You know your way," she said smilingly, but he thought there was an undercurrent of suggestion that he had better not presume upon that knowledge.

His last words to her were, he felt afterwards, not well chosen: "I notice you have no lift."

She replied: "You are very observant; we cannot afford one in this house, but of course there are others." Adam felt that she had an almost snobbish gift of charging ingenuousness with a breach of manners. He half suspected that she knew the secret of his parentage and was eternally prepared to use the knowledge against him, albeit unwilling to admit that such scapegraces as Byron O'Toole and Bride Macfadden could exist. He summed her up as an exquisite, if somewhat too high-browed lady; he opined that if she had a brother he would wear an outsize in hats.

Yet, as he descended the staircase, it was her charm that worked within him. He said to himself that the effrontery of her denial of interest in Oswald Onsin was a triumph of subtle dissimulation of passion. At the same time he wondered whether perhaps after all Mr. Sackville might not be what his real and his putative father had agreed in calling each other when at variance on things of the mind. He suddenly wondered, as he reached the street and saw Bentley's red creation looming heavenward

166

The Problem of Marriage

over his head, what on earth was Miss Nightingale's object in sending for him. Once before she had done so, but that was at the instigation of the Marchesa, who was the connection by marriage of her friend Lady Derrydown. . . . Did Miss Nightingale know by intuition, as she called it, that he was a member of that noble family? . . . He seldom thought of it himself; for he was more interested in his grandfather, the romantic baronet, than in his grandmother, the unkempt offspring of an Irish Earl. He hardly thought an Irish peerage sufficiently distinguished to compensate for the Marchesa's faults of style. . . . He remembered that even Caroline Brady, the shopgirl, had the air of looking down on her as an enemy of decent society. And although he had at once perceived that Caroline's attitude could not be sustained, it somehow had permanently left him ashamed of his grandmother . . . he thought of her as some one with whom Caroline could not bring herself to associate. . . . And now Caroline and the Marchesa were associates in death, and if one were to credit the letter of the faith that had built Bentley's cathedral for his glory and God's, the pair of them were now roasting in hell. Caroline through his fault and the Marchesa through his grandfather's. Therefore Caroline's perdition lay in some measure at the Marchesa's door. . . . But what would that matter to the Marchesa since she was clearly hopelessly damned anyhow as a suicide? . . . Or perhaps did her guardian angel argue for her in heaven, as her relatives' advocate on earth, that she had died through misadventure? . . . He found himself smiling at the notion, and at the consternation of Satan should he be made responsible for that lady's future.

In the glow of the setting sun the enormous building gleamed scarlet as Mephistopheles; it seemed to him to threaten London with a red

In London

revival of obscurantism. It was almost a consolation to recall that it was not yet paid for. He had an impression from his youth that churches never were paid for, but remained a pious excuse for breaches of the Lottery Act. He recalled that his mother had won a bottle of whisky with a church bazaar ticket which she had purchased in a moment of exaltation. He wondered if the contributions of Catholics no more spiritual than his mother had been declined, whether the campanile of Bentley's cathedral would have towered so authoritatively over Westminster. He could perceive that it was a nobler projection of Byzantine architecture than Mr. Oswald Onsin's theatre, but almost equally remote from every idea that bowed his knee to the name of Jesus. At eighteen, and as a successful London actor, his heart warmed as hotly to the Holy Name as when he was a ragamuffin of eight. But that architectural masterpiece at Westminster left all but his eye as dissatisfied as that masonic miscarriage, the Dublin pro-Cathedral wherein sturdier presters had battered out of recognition the image of his Saviour begotten in his mind by Father Innocent.

From these teleological dreams he was roused by the roar of Victoria Street welcoming him back to the world which the war had not yet robbed of all appearance of reality. Not having known the Metropolis in pre-war days, he took the scene before him as typical. In the mechanic of life and all the exterior things of human existence, London even on the Sunday summer evening in war-time seemed more vital than Dublin in its busiest hour. On the other hand the mentality of London seemed to him so far a feeble thing. Miss Nightingale, for example, was a beautiful, and he supposed a brilliant lady; he was prepared to believe that she lived half in heaven, but he was certain that the other half never touched earth. He deemed Mr. Sackville's passion

The Problem of Marriage

for her almost farcical in its fatuity. . . . And yet he saw clearly that he might fall in love with Miss Nightingale himself . . . and yet again he asked himself, why did she want him to call upon her? He had nothing whatever in common with Miss Nightingale, for it was his topmost passion to realise the meaning of things as they are, while she seemed intent on creating for herself an atmosphere of superficially reasonable unreality. At this time Adam did not carry in his mind the word parthenogenesis, but it contained the idea that Miss Nightingale's roses were parthenogenetically brought forth by her florist and her mutton cutlets by her cook. No doubt if she was in love with Oswald Onsin it was because of some quality that she imagined she had seen in him. . . . Yet it did seem absurd that a woman who had lived on friendly terms with Mr. Macarthy should condescend to waste any emotion over the manager of the Grand Theatre. . . . Could it be because he was in daily touch with Mr. Onsin that Miss Nightingale had sent for him? Or could it be that having met him at Lady Derrydown's she really was impressed with Adam and desirous of his company on his own merits? After all, at the Muses Club he had heard of comparatively mature women being in love with young men. . . . There was the leading case of Lady Bland and Mr. Tinkler: he calculated that the difference between Lady Bland's age and Mr. Tinkler's was no more disproportionate than Miss Nightingale's age and his own . . . and Miss Nightingale was unmarried. . . . That night, waking and dreaming, he sought the reasons why Miss Nightingale had remained so long unmarried. Heretofore he had taken it for granted that old maids were women who had never a chance to be rid of their maidenliness, with the exception of perhaps a few, who through vanity or misfortune had missed their chance, but he could not doubt that Miss Nightingale might have married

In London

again and again even had there been no sentimental Sackvilles pledged to her worship. He wondered if one day Miss Nightingale might say to Mr. Sackville that she surrendered, and whether Mr. Sackville would in that event survive the hour of victory. He supposed that Mr. Sackville must have the same feeling for Miss Nightingale as he himself had for Josephine, only perhaps rather more so ; for although he longed continuously for Josephine, his desire for her was never so acute as his occasional pangs of hunger at the sudden mention of the name of Barbara. . . . It was odd that he had heard nothing of Barbara since the Marchesa had confided to him the scarcely credible tale of her relations with her husband.

He wrote to Mr. Macarthy, whom he had not seen now for a whole year, telling him of his visit to Miss Nightingale and asking in a postscript how the Carahars were getting on. Mr. Macarthy replied that he was glad to think of him in the company of Miss Nightingale, and that he saw nothing of Mrs. Leaper-Carahar, and understood that her husband saw very little more. There was a rumour that Mrs. Burns meditated going to London to do war work and had invited her daughter to accompany her as chaperon. "If Mrs. Burns goes into munitions in London, it might be as well for you to go on tour," Mr. Macarthy said, and Adam was not quite sure whether this joke did not conceal a note of warning. He had long suspected that his guardian did not wish him and Barbara to come in contact now that she was a married woman. On the other hand, he persuaded himself that it would be pleasing to his guardian if he lost no time in calling on Miss Nightingale again, so the following Sunday he did so, and although this time uninvited, she seemed genuinely pleased to welcome him.

Considering that he had seen it but once before,

The Problem of Marriage

the gray room seemed full of familiar gestures, and the fresh roses poised above the white china bowed to him gracefully as though to imply that they had heard of him from their predecessors. He found himself wondering whether it might not be a pleasant thing to go on living till the end of time in such a suite of apartments as Miss Nightingale hallowed with her presence. . . . It occurred to him that she resembled at once the *Belle dame sans merci* of his first abstract love, in as much as she repelled all advances (unless, indeed, Mr. Onsin's?) and the Blessed Damozel of the pre-Raphaelites in that she might yet reward some perfect gentle knight, ignoring Mr. Onsin's kisses on her lips . . . and Adam, looking at her, found it incredible that Mr. Onsin should have so far ventured. If Jane Nightingale had been kissed, and he could not visualise the kissing of her even by himself, though practised in fanciful victories . . . it was certain that the creator of Lord Algy was not the man. Whatever Mr. Sackville might think he knew about her, Adam once for all refused to believe that *tendresses* in any shape or form had passed between his hostess and the author of *What Rot!* . . . He remembered now that Mr. Macarthy had implied ridicule of the idea in his only reference to the subject. . . . The Blessed Damozel could not condescend to such as Mr. Onsin, and Miss Nightingale looked the Blessed Damozel to the life, if her Damozellery (he coined the word) was what Mr. Pim of the Muses Club was wont to call "a bit passy." Truly she was a desirable creature, with the physical equipoise of a sexless archangel and the mental aloofness of a womanly woman. "I have come to ask your advice," said Adam.

He thought Miss Nightingale looked pleased. "My dear boy," said she, "what about?"

Adam was not quite sure what was the subject upon which he wished to consult Miss Nightingale,

In London

but he thought this a good opening to any interrogatory he might summon up the courage to put to her ; for he would appear to be disclosing his affairs to her when in fact he was prying into her own. Not that Adam ever applied the term " prying " to his inquisition into other people's business, and in a sense he was justified, for his was not vulgar prying ; his curiosity being never idle but always inspired by an unselfish interest in the meaning of life. Miss Nightingale was so utterly unlike any woman whom he had ever met that he felt justified at all costs in penetrating the secret of the difference between her and her frailer sisters. " I want you to tell me," said he with sufficient solemnity, " whether you think I ought to get married ? "

He was quite prepared for Miss Nightingale to laugh at him, but she kept a serious countenance without apparent effort as she said : " It is strange that you should ask me that."

" Oh, not at all," said Adam lightly, " I feel that no one could give me better advice."

Miss Nightingale looked at him very gravely. " Why do you feel that ? "

" Because," said Adam, returning her glance with equal gravity, " I do know that in many ways you are wiser than I."

Miss Nightingale shrugged her shoulders, or rather allowed them ever so gracefully to rise and fall. " I am several years older than you," said she, " but it is as impossible for me to understand things from a man's point of view as it is for a man to understand things from a woman's point of view."

" But is that so impossible ? " Adam argued. " I cannot imagine any point of view that Mr. Macarthy wouldn't understand."

Miss Nightingale smiled with just a suspicion of bitterness. " Can't you ? " said she. " Then perhaps it may interest you to know that much as I

The Problem of Marriage

like him, he and I have failed signally to understand one another."

"Perhaps that was a long time ago?" Adam promptly suggested.

"It would seem a long time ago to you," Miss Nightingale gently replied. "To me it seems only yesterday, but in any case, however long since the original misunderstanding, we have never got rid of it."

"But," Adam protested, "I thought you were such good friends?"

Miss Nightingale found something wrong with the lid of her tea-pot and became so interested in it that her very conversation appeared to be addressed to it. "I think I have no better friend in the world than Stephen Macarthy," she said, "and I am sure that he has no more faithful friend than I. But there is at least one subject on which he and I utterly disagree."

Adam felt that he had struck oil. "Of course I wouldn't on any account intrude," said he, "but may I ask what that is?"

After a pause she answered: "I wonder that you do not know that it is the very subject upon which you wish to consult me."

Chapter Twenty-Two

THE PROBLEM REMAINS UNSOLVED

As Adam listened to Miss Nightingale he felt his brain hot in pursuit of an idea, and almost prayed the gods that he might not lose the chase through overrunning it. "The subject of marriage?" he questioned, and as Miss Nightingale lowered her chin in silent acquiescence he assured her that he would never have guessed that Mr. Macarthy did not share her views.

Miss Nightingale glanced at him, not perhaps without suspicion. "Do you know what my views are?" she asked.

"I think I know you well enough to guess," said Adam, "that your view of marriage would be a very beautiful one, and so I thought that Mr. Macarthy would be sure to agree with it."

Miss Nightingale said firmly: "Mr. Macarthy's view of marriage and mine are diametrically opposed."

"Well, well," said Adam, "wonders will never cease," and tried to remember if Mr. Macarthy had ever said anything to indicate what his view of marriage might be. He had always supposed that Mr. Macarthy's view of marriage was the same as his own: likewise he had taken it for granted that Miss Nightingale's view was the same as his own: he was now a little surprised to find that he had no view. Father Innocent had taught him that marriage was a holy sacrament, but his experience failed to give him any example of a marriage corresponding with this description. For himself he had wanted

The Problem Remains Unsolved

to marry Josephine, he had wanted to marry Barbara, and when Caroline was dead he had talked of wanting to marry her until Mr. Macarthy had a little harshly cleared away that illusion. But he certainly had the impression that at one time his guardian would have wished him to marry Barbara Burns. . . . At last, critically considering his hostess's cold, clear-cut features, he hazarded the guess: "I suppose you think people ought not to marry at all?"

Miss Nightingale was apparently startled into immediate rejoinder: "On the contrary, I think everybody . . . almost everybody, ought to marry."

"Then why didn't you?" asked Adam point blank.

Miss Nightingale's tone turned to marble as she answered: "I did not say that everybody ought to marry, I said almost everybody; which reminds me that you asked me, before we got on to this unfortunate question, whether you ought to marry."

"Did I?" said Adam absent-mindedly. He pinched himself to add, while she still stared at him: "It's extraordinary the way you take me out of myself. I wanted to ask you about my being married, and now I can't think of anything but about your being married."

Miss Nightingale suppressed the ghost of a smile. "I don't think I broached that subject."

"Didn't you?" said Adam. "Then I suppose it must have been a sort of telepathy."

Miss Nightingale almost frowned. "What must have been a sort of telepathy?"

"My thinking," Adam explained "that you wanted to tell me all about it."

"Do you talk like this to everybody?" Miss Nightingale demanded.

Adam replied with truth that this was the first time he had ever touched upon such delicate ground

In London

with a lady. He did not think it necessary to add that this was his first opportunity.

True, Miss Durward had a way of turning the conversation on more or less matrimonial topics ; but with her he was rather on his defence, and if forced to answer her points, merely followed where she led. He had nothing to learn from Miss Durward that he really wished to know, but Miss Nightingale filled him with an almost saintly curiosity : it seemed to him that she might have something to reveal which could change the whole tenor of his life. She stood for the one vein of refinement running through this vulgar London of the stage and streets, which was all he yet knew of the metropolis. After Mr. Macarthy she seemed to him the most refined person in the world, and Mr. Macarthy came first only by reason of his obviously superior intellect. Miss Nightingale had the refinement of one for whom common things have no existence : Mr. Macarthy, ignoring nothing, had eliminated them from his environment : surely he and Miss Nightingale were intended by Providence to agree ? . . . He said so to Miss Nightingale.

She seemed at once flustered and pleased : " Have I not told you that we disagree ? "

" But what do you disagree about ? " he insisted.

" I have said more than once that we disagree about marriage," she reiterated, and had almost an air of being vexed with him.

Adam sought to dissipate it : " I know I must seem dreadfully stupid," he explained, " but, you see, you're quite my ideal woman. . . . I mean my ideal of what a woman ought to be."

" You mustn't idealise me," his hostess murmured.

" I don't idealise you," Adam gallantly assured her. " I only idealise women generally when I think that some of them may perhaps resemble you."

'The Problem Remains Unsolved

"I'm quite an ordinary woman," Miss Nightingale said in the most modest tone.

Adam shook his head. "You're not that," said he, "any more than Mr. Macarthy is an ordinary man."

"I cannot understand," said Miss Nightingale, "why you should bracket us together in your mind."

As she apparently wished to understand it, Adam took courage and went on: "I think it a great pity that you didn't . . . that he didn't . . . that you and he . . ." it seemed to Adam that it was Mr. Sackville and not himself who was making this statement, which perhaps by reason of her familiarity with Mr. Sackville, Miss Nightingale accepted as complete.

"I'm sure I don't know why you think that," said she.

"Did it never enter into your mind to marry him?" queried Adam.

"I won't go so far as to say that," Miss Nightingale admitted. "I have known him a great many years, and all sorts of ideas may enter the mind without making a lasting impression."

"And of course," Adam suggested, "there was always the man you were in love with?"

Miss Nightingale leaned forward, her chin resting on her hand, and gazed at him wistfully. "I'm afraid I don't follow you."

"Well," said Adam a trifle knowingly, "there was . . ." he began to say Oswald, but turned his tongue off in time to form the words: "a certain distinguished dramatist."

Miss Nightingale wearily shook her head. "Mr. Macarthy is, I suppose, in a sense a dramatist, but I wouldn't call him very distinguished. . . . Who on earth do you mean?"

Adam felt nonplussed. "Mr Sackville," said he, "told me that you had never thought of marriage

In London

because you were too much interested in a witty and brilliant dramatist, or something of the kind."

His hostess positively laughed. "Poor Arthur. . . . He really has the most fantastic ideas."

"Has he?" Adam queried, "he never mentioned them to me."

Miss Nightingale laughed lightly: "But I understand you to say that he said I was in love with a famous dramatist?"

"That's what I understood from him," Adam nodded.

Miss Nightingale's tone took the note of a cross-examiner. "Are you sure he said anything of the kind?"

"Something of the kind certainly," Adam insisted, "I don't remember his words. . . . You know his habit of leaving them out . . . but he really gave me to understand that you might be in love with Oswald Onsin."

Miss Nightingale sprang from her chair like a wounded antelope. "How could you believe such a thing?" she cried.

"I didn't know you then," Adam stammered; "that was at Eastbourne before I even saw you. Of course since then I've thought it was absurd, but really and truly that seemed the idea that he wished to convey."

"But this is monstrous!" Miss Nightingale protested. "If he ever said such a thing he must have been mad, for, after all, he knows me pretty well and never once have I said or done anything that could give colour to such a suggestion. If it were possible for me to care for an actor at all, I should far prefer poor Arthur himself, who, after all, is a gentleman in his own limited way; but as for Mr. Onsin, I can't stand him on the stage, much less off it."

"Did you ever at any time like him?" Adam suggested, "or," he added with a great inspiration,

The Problem Remains Unsolved

"did you ever, just to tease poor Mr. Sackville, pretend to like him?"

Miss Nightingale frowned. "I never tease and I never pretend," said she. "I know nothing whatever about Mr. Onsin beyond seeing him play one or two parts, as it seemed to me, not very well, and hearing what Arthur Sackville had to say about him. Good-natured as Arthur is, he never told me anything that would make me like him any better."

After a pause Adam said: "Well, I suppose it's all my stupidity. Sackville probably meant somebody else."

"But there is nobody else," Miss Nightingale assured him. "I never in my life told Arthur I was in love with any one, for the simple reason that I never have been in love with any one," she added: "I am not likely to be in love with any one now."

Adam thought for a long time, trying to recall the terms of his conversation with Mr. Sackville on Beachy Head. At length he said thoughtfully: "Can you remember any one who feels for you the same as John Brown did for Queen Victoria?"

Miss Nightingale coloured charmingly. "It is not for me to say what John Brown felt for Queen Victoria, but Arthur himself used to tell me in the early days of our acquaintance, before he quite realised the sort of woman I am, that he would always love me as humbly and as steadfastly as John Brown loved Queen Victoria."

"I don't understand about John Brown loving Queen Victoria," Adam confessed. "What had it to do with his soul going marching on?"

Miss Nightingale reflected for some moments. "Surely there is some mistake," said she, "you're thinking of the American John Brown; Queen Victoria's John Brown was a Highland servant."

"Oh!" said Adam, and looked foolish. After a long rearrangement of his ideas he went on apologetically: "Perhaps after all I've misunderstood

In London

everything that Mr. Sackville told me about you. . . . Except, of course, that he was very much in love with you himself." He looked at her: "That is true, isn't it?"

"Poor Arthur thinks it's true," Miss Nightingale said, "or at all events he tells me that he thinks it's true, but he would probably soon tire of me if we were man and wife."

"Why should he tire of you?" Adam asked, in a tone that implied his confidence that his hostess would prove many-sided as Cleopatra.

"Frankly," said Miss Nightingale, "I should be bored to death by him, and my weariness could hardly fail to react even on a man so amiable. We should end up as cat and dog."

Again Adam shook his head: "I cannot see you as a cat or a dog," he said.

Miss Nightingale laughed softly. "I have both cat and dog in me," she said, "particularly cat, and so has every woman, no matter how artfully she cages it. . . . You'll find that if you ever marry."

Adam heaved a deep sigh. "I don't suppose I ever shall."

Miss Nightingale turned quizzical, perhaps to hide disappointment. "But you came here to talk to me about getting married?"

"Yes," said Adam, "I did, but you've driven the notion quite out of my mind."

Miss Nightingale looked alarmed. "I don't understand . . ."

"Neither do I," said Adam, "but so it is."

"But you really mustn't think that I disapprove of marriage," Miss Nightingale asserted nervously. "I think it's entirely beautiful when the right man marries the right woman, only that happens so very seldom. . . . I sometimes wonder whether it has ever happened."

"Then," said Adam, "you've never met the right man?"

The Problem Remains Unsolved

Miss Nightingale shifted in her chair. "No, certainly not, not in the sense you mean. . . . At anyrate I have always considered that marriage is out of the question for me. My temperament doesn't lend itself to marriage, and the women most like myself among my friends who married, rather made a mess of it, I'm afraid; they expected too much of their husbands."

"What exactly did they expect?" Adam asked point blank.

"For one thing," said Miss Nightingale, "they expected them to be faithful."

"And weren't they?" Adam asked, mildly surprised.

"No," said Miss Nightingale sternly, "they were not. . . . I mean they were not as faithful as they ought to have been."

"Oh," said Adam, and "Ah!" said Adam. "You mean . . . ?"

"Never mind what I mean," said Miss Nightingale with the air of waking from a trance, "this is a subject you are far too young for me to discuss with you."

"But Mr. Macarthy discusses every subject with me," Adam claimed, not quite truthfully.

"I am not Mr. Macarthy," said Miss Nightingale flatly.

"No," Adam rejoined, "but you know I cannot help feeling that you might very well be Mrs. Macarthy."

His hostess covered her face with her hands. "Talk of teasing people," she said. "It seems to me that you do nothing else."

"I'm awfully sorry," said Adam innocently, "but I don't at all follow. You can't mean that I'm teasing you by talking as if you were my guardian's wife? . . . It isn't as if you'd wanted to be his wife."

"I did not say that it was," said Miss Nightingale sternly.

"To tell you the truth," said Adam confidentially,

In London

"Mr. Macarthy is so queer in some ways that I don't know for a positive fact whether he's married or single."

"You may take it from me," said Miss Nightingale, "that he is not married."

"I can't help thinking it odd," said Adam, "that you should both be unmarried."

Miss Nightingale looked at him a little distrustfully. "If Mr. Macarthy discusses everything with you, as you say, it seems odd that you should not know that he does not believe in marriage at all."

Adam shook his head, dumbfounded. "I never heard him say a word to that effect," said he.

"Then it is quite obvious that he does not discuss everything with you," said Miss Nightingale.

Adam thought he saw a ray of light, deeming that Barbara's marriage with Mr. Leaper-Carahar, C.B., had disgusted his guardian with matrimony. "When did he tell you that he was against marriage?"

"Before you were born," said Miss Nightingale.

Events anterior to his birth and not bearing directly upon himself always appeared to Adam outside the range of useful discussion. So, feeling that he had elicited from his hostess all that he might well draw from her upon this occasion, he presently took his leave. But on the threshold he said: "I'm afraid you must find me a terrible little bore."

And to his delight she answered with her most urbane smile: "You are the most interesting person I've ever met, except one."

Adam cocked his chin, and he knew his eyes shone as he cried: "It's awfully good of you to say that."

"And awfully silly," said Miss Nightingale, "but anyhow, the mischief's done."

"Then I may come again?" he asked, ardent for more flattery.

But her only answer was a smile as she shut her door. He descended the staircase furiously in love with Miss Nightingale.

Chapter Twenty-Three

THE SELF-HELP MINISTRY

ADAM interpreted Miss Nightingale's smile in the light of what she had said before, and became a constant visitor at the flat reflecting the glory of Westminster Cathedral, or rather, failing to reflect it; for the rubicund visage of the huge building made the grayness of her apartments all the paler. Never once did he see any colour there save when her cheeks mantled talking of Mr. Macarthy. He no longer doubted that Mr. Sackville's theory of her love for an unnamed dramatist of great brilliance was a foible of the actor's brain, and that the one man who had touched her heart was his own guardian. But although Miss Nightingale encouraged Adam to talk to her about Mr. Macarthy, she turned illusive when he looked for information in exchange. She had known him a long time, had been fascinated by his brain-power, and considered him to be wasting himself in Ireland: that was almost all he could gather from her. He wrote to Mr. Macarthy that he saw much of Miss Nightingale and that they talked constantly of him. Mr. Macarthy replied that he had wished Adam to learn wisdom from Miss Nightingale and not waste her time and his own in small talk.

Fortified by this letter, Adam felt justified in making love to Miss Nightingale, but she received his advances in a somewhat baffling way, appearing to be unaware of them. He asked her if she had heard that Shakespeare had married a lady several years older than himself.

In London

She answered : " He couldn't very well get out of it, could he ? " and Adam, not being able clearly to remember the circumstances, and suspecting that he was on dangerous ground, dropped the subject ; but he said boldly that a man as clever as Shakespeare could marry a woman old enough to be his mother.

" He could," said Miss Nightingale, " but would he ? "

" Why not ? " asked Adam.

" That is not for me to say," Miss Nightingale answered, " but Shakespeare himself, you may remember, is very insistent that a woman should always marry a man older than herself. 'So wears she to him, so sways she level with her husband's heart.' "

" Well," said Adam doggedly, " then I don't agree with Shakespeare."

" The lady you once came to consult me about," Miss Nightingale suggested, " was she older than you ? "

" I hardly remember," said Adam, " but the lady I want to talk about now is a lot older, she is in fact as old as you."

" Then I'll not make the poor dear woman ridiculous by discussing her," said Miss Nightingale, and firmly refused to be further drawn, but in his heart he suspected that she knew what he meant and was pleased by it ; for never did she shut him out altogether, never hasten his departure, and never hint at indifference as to whether he came again. He said to himself that if she might not have Mr. Macarthy's company, she really found him the next best thing.

But there was one fissure dividing his position from hers. She did not open it, and he did not for some time suspect it, but once discovered it yawned between them. Miss Nightingale was hot for the prosecution of the war and thought it high time

The Self-Help Ministry

that Adam was in khaki. Now agreeable as Adam's life was he would at a hint from Mr. Macarthy have thrown it all up and gone to face wounds, sickness and death, but he had no instinctive feeling that he ought to be fighting England's battle. This attitude baffled Miss Nightingale, who was a sentimentally patriotic Englishwoman, through and through. She had worked hard at one or other war service from the very beginning, and being a highly qualified nurse, though she had ceased to practice professionally, had done first-class service near the firing-line until compulsorily invalided home. Since then, forced to restrict herself to light work, she had acted as inspector for one of the Red Cross organisations. So it was that she had come in contact with that slightly eccentric peeress, the present Countess of Derrydown, whom she had inspired with a greater devotion than did Britannia. The Countess did not greatly care whether Britain sank or swam, but a frown from Miss Nightingale would reduce her to tears of repentance.

It was from the Countess herself that Adam gathered these facts about Miss Nightingale and her view of him ; for she was punctiliously reticent when he visited her at the flat ; so reticent that Adam had no suspicion of her disapproval until the Countess warned him of it. He had not seen Lady Derrydown since the death of his grandmother, until a chance encounter one Sunday at Miss Nightingale's, when they came away together, she volunteering her permission for him to cavalier her to Eaton Place.

Adam had no stomach for this journey ; for that street had become a place of horror to him since he had seen the old Marchesa lifted from the roadway like nothing that he could think of so much as a hideous Guy Fawkes : the very carcass of false romance. To think of that thing being a woman at all was fearsome, to think of her as being his

In London

grandmother little less appalling than the thought of her who had been his mother. When Adam thought of those who gave him life he abhorred it : the donors dismissed from his memory, he rejoiced in their gift.

This paradox had sprung into his brain when Lady Derrydown, having led him as far as Ebury Street with barely a monosyllable returning her chatter of her friend, offered him a penny for his thoughts. She neither paid for nor received the goods, Adam smiling grimly at the impertinence, which nettled her into the inquiry why he was not in the army.

Adam answered lightly that like her husband he thought the war was not an Irishman's business.

"Derrydown thinks nothing of the kind," the Countess declared. "He can't be in khaki because of his heart, but he does no end of war work."

"At the club with Mr. O'Hagan-Bathe?" Adam suggested.

"I don't know what he does at the club with Mr. O'Hagan-Bathe," the lady blurted, "but you ought to know what his war work is, since his offices are over the Grand Theatre."

"Oh!" said Adam, "is he the Self-Help Ministry?"

"I should think he was," said the Countess, "he's written nearly all their advertisements, and every one says they're simply splendid." She pointed opportunely to one on a pillar-box outside St. Peter's Church and stayed her companion that they might read it.

"Britons Strike Home!" it cried in strident capitals, adding in type not quite so large: "You Can Do This Staying At Home. . . . How? . . . Through Self-Help. . . . If You Will Help Yourself Your Country Will Do The Rest."

"What do you think of that?" Lady Derrydown proudly asked, and seemed disappointed when Adam

The Self-Help Ministry

answered that it seemed to him a direct encouragement to fraudulent contractors.

"I don't think it was meant for that," said Lady Derrydown. "Of course one can't help being on friendly terms with profiteers, but I'm sure Derrydown makes little or nothing out of the war himself."

"D'you happen to know what the Self-Help Ministry is for?" Adam asked.

"Oh, yes," she answered eagerly, "creating civil billets of indispensable importance and helping to win the war?"

"But how does it help to win the war?" Adam insisted.

"Derrydown did explain that to me," she said, "but I've forgotten, except that you do it through Self-Help."

"I'm dashed if I can see how selfishness of any kind is going to win the war," Adam murmured.

"Oh, not selfishness," Lady Derrydown corrected him, "truly not selfishness. . . . Self-Helpishness. I remember now, he said the idea was to dissuade people who were entitled to pensions from applying for them; if nobody asked for anything that would be a help, wouldn't it?"

"A help to whom?" Adam asked drily.

His companion shook her head. "I'm not clever enough to tell you that," she said, "but I'll ask Derrydown." She pointed her hand up Belgrave Street: "There's another poster of Derrydown's over there, perhaps that will make it clear."

So they called another halt to study this: "Britons," it said, as the other had done, "Strike Home! If You Have Lost Your Father, Remember You Might Have Lost Your Mother. . . . See That You Keep Her, And The Best Way Is By Saving The State The Cost Of Supporting Her."

"I think that's very touching," said Lady Derrydown, "don't you?"

For answer Adam said that he espied yet another

In London

pillar-box with yet another poster in the distance and suggested a farther pilgrimage to this. Lady Derrydown in recognition of his appreciation of her husband's appeal, accompanied him, and again they read: "Britons Strike Home! . . . Strike Home By Self-Help. This Is How You Can Help, By Self-Help. If You Have Lost A Leg, Remember You Might Have Lost Your Life, And Ask For Nothing. On the back of this pillar-box was yet another poster: "Britons Strike Home! How Though Disabled You Can Help. If You Have Lost An Arm, Remember You Are No Longer With The Army, And Be Grateful To Your Country And Content."

"That's just like Derrydown," said his Countess, "he always looks on the cheerful side."

Adam felt that his appetite for the noble peer's compositions was sharpening. "Let's go and look for some more," he suggested, but Lady Derrydown pleaded the necessity to dress for dinner. "There's a very nice one just outside the house," she said, and on yet another pillar-box, the black base of which had not so long before been spotted by the Marchesa's blood, Adam read: "Britons Strike Home! If You Have Lost All You Love In The War, That Is All The More Reason Why You Should Love Your Country's Government. See That You Cost Them Nothing," and on the other side: "The True Patriot Asks Nothing Of His Country, Britons Expect Nothing Of Yours, But Strike Home!"

"I think they're much the best of all the Ministry posters, don't you?" said the Countess.

Adam confessed that his acquaintance with the literature of war posters was restricted to a not infrequent perusal of the advice that his King and Country wanted him.

"I think that, too, is a beautiful poster," the Countess declared, "I wonder that it has never
188

The Self-Help Ministry

stirred your heart to be told that your King and Country want you."

"Well, you see," said Adam with sweet simplicity, "I may have a country, but I should hardly be justified in saying that I had a king."

The Countess looked at him resentfully. "Are you really a Sinn Feiner," she demanded.

Adam thoughtfully answered: "I don't know that I am, but I wouldn't positively say that I am not."

The Countess still stood at the top of the steps, gazing proudly at her husband's blazonry on the letter-box. "I can't understand any one being a Sinn Feiner when he reads a thing like that."

In a fair imitation of Mr. Macarthy's tone Adam answered: "I can't understand a Sinn Feiner reading that when he might be doing anything else."

"What is a Sinn Feiner?" asked the Countess. "It's an Irish rebel, of course, I know that, or at any rate a sort of moonlighter; but what does the word actually mean? Derrydown says it means: 'To Hell with the Orangemen,' and what are the Orangemen?"

"Your husband ought to know that," Adam said. "It simply means Self-Help."

The Countess clapped her hands and then knocked at her door. "Come in and tell Derrydown that. He's been asked to do a poster for Ireland, and wouldn't it be a great score to head it Sinn Feiners Strike Home? . . ." As Adam made no answer she went on: "You will come up now and tell him, won't you?"

It was not Adam's intention to do anything of the kind, but in a moment he found himself in the oddly familiar drawing-room, listening to the Countess burbling to a prematurely middle-aged gentleman courteously dissembling his feelings, the information that Sinn Fein meant Self-Help.

In London

"Isn't it priceless?" she demanded, "that it should mean that, when you thought it meant 'To Hell with the Orangemen'?"

"I don't quite think that that was altogether what I said," Lord Derrydown protested without cogency, "but I think no one will deny . . ." he glanced at Adam with obvious anxiety lest he should do so, "I really think that few if any will deny, that if Sinn Fein, whatever the word exactly means, were to turn out a success, I'm sure that no one will deny, or comparatively few, that practically no Orangemen, if I am to believe what my neighbour Carson says, would like it."

"Carson is an old dear," cried the Countess, "but I really never understood that he objected to Self-Help."

In a condition wavering between laughter and tears, Adam gazed on the Earl and on the Countess and then on the Earl again: he wondered if they had children: he tried to be humble and not congratulate himself on belonging to the sinister branch of the family. The Earl broke silence with a pretty strong hint that he supposed his wife wanted him to give Adam a job in the Self-Help Ministry.

"I never thought of it," said the Countess, "but it really would be a good idea, only I do think that he ought to be going to the Front."

"Damn the Front," said his lordship. "It costs more money than it's worth," he added, to account for his note of disapproval.

"But war is bound to cost money," said the Countess.

"Not when they belted each other with clubs," said his lordship. "In the days of chivalry war was cheap enough, but to think of firing a field gun at a quid a time and God knows how many rounds a minute all day and all night for years on end makes me sick." His voice rose protestingly: "And gas! Just think of it! Look at the price of gas!"

The Self-Help Ministry

He turned to Adam apologetically : " You'll forgive my talking shop, but the business of my Ministry is to try to keep down the non-productive costs of the war. I have to cod fellows into going about on one leg as if it were two in order that another department may spend the money blowing the heads off Germans. . . . I'm sick of it, I tell you."

" But it's better than being in the trenches," said the Countess.

" I don't know," said the Earl, " at this time of the year when it's dry under foot the trenches are not so bad for lads who like playing at boy scout and that kind of thing . . . You've been a boy scout ? " he suggested to Adam.

Said Adam : " No, I can't say I was that, though I ought to have been one of your aunt's Infant Druids."

His lordship asked what the hell the Infant Druids were, and then went on without waiting for an answer : " You'll know, perhaps, was my aunt a Sinn Feiner or was she not ? O'Hagan-Bathe says he knows for a fact she was, but I can't help thinking that the old bird was just out for a bit of a lark that Easter Monday." He wiped his forehead. " My God, what a relief it was when she fell out of the window there."

" It's all very well for you to say that," the Countess grumbled as she lit a cigarette, " you hadn't to help to pick her up, and after all, she was no end of an old sport."

" What did Miss Nightingale think of her," Adam asked.

The Countess giggled. " Janie Nightingale would rather die than tell any one what she thought of the Marchesa. I'm not sure that she wouldn't rather die than think about her at all, but I can tell you what she thinks about you."

Adam raised a pleased face : " She does me the

In London

honour to think about me ? ” he said, “ and do you know what she thinks ? ”

“ Yes,” said the Countess calmly, “ she thinks you’re a damned young skunk not to be in the trenches.”

Adam’s shocked ears burned. “ Did she say that ? ” he quavered.

The Countess nodded. “ Not in my words, but serpent talk she did.”

Chapter Twenty-Four

TO FIGHT OR NOT TO FIGHT

IN the chair in which his grandmother had sat a few moments before she flung herself to her doom Adam sat staring at the patches of red wall covering, which interlocked with the Countess of Derrydown's odd collection of pictures. Finally his eye rested on the provocative imbecility rejoicing in the title of "A Toi." He felt he ought still to be able to despise its proprietors, but could not bring himself to make head against them, so overcome was he at hearing what Miss Nightingale really thought of him. The knowledge did not make him wish that he were in the trenches: it made him regret that he had not been with Columba and Patrick O'Meagher on that immortal Easter Monday. But, anyhow, it made him wish that he was anywhere but in the Countess of Derrydown's drawing-room. . . . Abruptly he rose to go.

"You mustn't pay any attention to what my wife says," the Earl affably admonished him, "she's always egging on people to join the army, but when I had very nearly worked up enough enthusiasm to join an O.T.C. she said she'd divorce me if I didn't get a medical certificate to say I really mustn't."

The Countess said with dignity: "I knew your brains would be more valuable at home than at the Front. . . . After all there would have been no Self-Help Ministry if I'd let you come to grief in the army."

"No," agreed his lordship moodily, "there would

In London

have been no Self-Help Ministry if I'd come to grief."

"Would that have mattered?" Adam promptly asked, unable to resist the Parthian shot.

His lordship took it amiably: "Faith, it would have mattered to me," he said with a not unpleasant twinkle in his eye.

So Adam parted from his unsought hosts without rancour, but as he circumvented Belgrave Square with all its greater houses turned into some form of amateur War Ministry, destructive or curative, he was deeply indignant with the vulgarity of the Countess and the treacherous reticence of Miss Nightingale. As he walked through Hyde Park he birched vindictively the trees, and such upright things as came within reach of his cane, at the thought that Miss Nightingale had smiled in welcome at him, to sneer at him after his departure.

Miss Durward, seeing him ruffled, failed signally to smooth him. He slept badly, and though it was a hot summer night, presently rose and drew his blinds that he might light up and write to Mr. Macarthy, pouring out a mournful plaint against the lady whose wisdom as well as virtue his guardian had bid him honour. "You will be surprised to hear," he wrote, "that your friend Miss Nightingale, whom you told me to go and see, and who seemed to me so nice, makes fun of me to her friends for not being in the army—the English army, if you please. But I don't see any more than you do why an Irishman should be in the English army. In fact I don't see why he should be in any army at all since there's no Irish army for him to be in. It only makes me feel ashamed that I ran away from Ireland the way I did. Not that I pretend to feel very much about Ireland either, I mean in the sense of wanting to fight for her; I don't believe that any country's worth fighting about, in fact I never heard of anything yet that was worth fighting

To Fight or Not to Fight

about, but if I'm going to fight about anything, that is, fight for any country, then I'll fight for Ireland and nothing else." The letter ended with a rhetorical expression of his resolution to visit Miss Nightingale no more.

Dawn had broken when Adam finished this letter and went to bed. Re-reading it before going to his bath he liked it less than in the first blush of composition, but, though dissatisfied with its style and suspicious that he might win severe criticism from any who happened to disagree with him, he posted it after breakfast and awaited with confidence, if with some curiosity, his guardian's reply. It arrived on the Wednesday afternoon.

Writing from his Dublin address, Mr. Macarthy said in effect: "MY DEAR BOY,—You tell me that our friend Miss Nightingale deplores the fact that you are not serving in the British army. The form of her strictures on your conduct, as reported by Lady Derrydown, have an unflattering implication, but I know Miss Nightingale well enough to judge that she did not speak as reported. That she regrets your absence from the fighting line is, after all, flattering to you; for she must imagine that your presence there would make some difference, and you will be justified in assuming that it would be a change for the better since the state of affairs could hardly be worse. . . . Though in point of fact I anticipate that our generals may yet succeed in making it worse before the Americans come to our rescue. You see I write of the situation critically as an Irishman. As an Irishman I am indignant at Miss Nightingale's suggestion that you, who are my ward, should be seduced by her into joining the British army. . . . On the other hand I am bound to put to you in fairness to all parties the other side of the case. . . . For some eighteen months now, which is an appreciable proportion of your whole life, you have been domiciled in England, living

In London

on what I might call equal terms with other young Englishmen, were it not for the fact that you are actually better off than all but a mere handful. I put it to you that it might be said you cannot in honour go on living in England taking five hundred a year out of the pockets of English people (a considerable percentage of whom have probably died of wounds or disease since they paid their money for the privilege of seeing you act) without accepting the liabilities as well as the rewards of being to all intents and purposes a British citizen. . . . To me it would be a terribly painful thing if you were killed or your health ruined in a war which need not have been any concern of yours, but since you ask me, I tell you that, if I were in your position, I should feel that now you are approaching the age at which Englishmen by the laws of their country must be prepared to fight for that country, you should either throw in your lot with them or return to your own country. If your point is that your conscience forbids you to fight, then I advise you that you spend some of your ill-gotten gains on learning to drive an ambulance or some other useful work which will not involve you in butchering your fellow-men."

Adam was conscious of shock as he took in at a glance the purport of this letter ; and study did not remove the uneasiness of that first moment. It was clear that even Mr. Macarthy thought he should be at the Front. He wrote off to him on the spur of the moment a letter complaining of his change of attitude. "Why didn't you warn me before?" he demanded, "that you thought me a coward?" To which Mr. Macarthy at once replied that such a thought had never entered his head.

"You very well know that I have never interfered with the working of your conscience," Mr. Macarthy reminded him. . . . "I have never told you what I thought you ought to do, though I may

196

To Fight or Not to Fight

have told you of things you had better refrain from doing. As you were settled in England I thought it well that you should be brought into contact, as a corrective to the mentality of the theatre, or of the camp-followers of the theatre, with the point of view of the better sort of English people. . . . I know no better sort than Miss Nightingale, who has a tolerable brain and something like a beautiful character: her limitations are those of her sex and nation—which in spite of, or perhaps because of her German extraction, is markedly English. It is natural that a woman who has worn herself to death at the Front should expect her male friends to go there too. The possibility of her country being wrong never occurs to persons of Miss Nightingale's temperament. And indeed of all the nations, the big, predatory nations, cutting each other's throats at the present time, England seems to me on the whole the least wrong. You cannot expect any woman with an untrained political sense to realise that England opposes to the brutal efficiency of Prussia and her imitators a dishonest opportunism, perhaps as inhumane in effect, and at worst there remains to her the defence that England is an amateur cut-throat struggling in the grip of a professional one. . . . Think this over. . . . And think over another point which gives me much ground for thought: There never has been, during all the centuries in which they have been in conflict, any excuse either in morality or common-sense for England's attitude towards Ireland. The English people, as apart from those highwaymen schoolboys called gentlemen adventurers, have lost far more than they have gained by the Irish policy of their rulers, who not only used the riff-raff of England to bully decent Irishmen, but the riff-raff of Ireland to bully decent Englishmen. But the calling in of America to save the alleged Liberalism of Europe means that England at all events must

In London

pretend to abandon her traditional Irish policy, and I am convinced that Woodrow Wilson (who appears to me to be the only statesman in the world, at all events on the side of progress, who combines honesty with striking power) is determined that she shall abandon it. . . . I tell you this to make it quite clear that although I do not urge you to risk your life in the furtherance of English interests, yet in my view an Irishman may devote himself to England's service in the present grave crisis without feeling himself to be a traitor to his own country.

. . . I write you this almost in spite of myself; for my whole mentality revolts at the idea of an old man, as I feel myself to be, being directly or indirectly a party to a young man running an avoidable risk. My only rational excuse is that I think death the least of all the risks that any man can run."

When Adam had reached so far he was fully ready to think over what his guardian put to him. He found himself wondering how he had failed to give it more serious thought before. There was one very good reason: He had come to London not yet seventeen, and commencing with his seventeenth birthday he had been fulfilling a theatrical engagement which had necessitated his pretending for three hours every Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, and six hours every Wednesday and Saturday for eighteen months on end to be a boy not yet seventeen, and so despite his plump prosperity and the addition of an inch or two to his height, he remained to outward appearance so much a schoolboy that at eighteen and a half the busiest recruiting officer still ignored him as too obviously a lad.

And it hardly needs to be said that his looks did not altogether belie him. Physically he was less developed than the average English youth of his age: he hardly reached the standard height, and

198

To Fight or Not to Fight

even, as most of his fellow-countrymen, was far below what in England was for that height the standard weight. His very countenance was that of a bare adolescent: easily he would have passed for a girl, having still no need to shave. His eyes, if not as large, were as blue as Miss Nightingale's own; and his complexion, well preserved by cocoa-butter and cleanliness from the ravages of theatrical make-up, had the delicate pink and white of one content with little food and less drink. For the rest the swirl of dissipation round him titillated his brain but offered him no temptation. A seminarist could hardly have lived more prudently. So he comfortably met his liabilities with little more than half his income, sending the rest to Mr. Macarthy to invest for him: his chief expenditure was on books; for he sadly missed his guardian's library. In fine, though essentially a man, he was a man in nothing but essentials.

He could not bring himself to think that fighting was an occupation for any man. The sight of the common soldiers with their woebegone faces, lost in the mazes of the London stations, or plodding desperately, tin hats jangling against trenching tools, towards the reinforcement trains stirred him to tears of rage. . . . He could not bear to see other men going to throw their lives away in this incredibly nightmarish chance medley. . . . And now he found that the one man in whose guidance he had perfect faith made it a reproach that he did not join that pageant of sad travellers. . . . Though his whole soul rebelled at the notion, he made up his mind that on the following Monday he would offer himself at the Central Recruiting Offices.

The last days of the week sank him in the first melancholy he had suffered from since leaving Dublin: he felt as a man condemned to death without honourable reason. . . . And then on the Saturday night by the very last post came one more

In London

letter from Mr. Macarthy which again changed the outlook. "Dr. Ahearn tells me," said he, "that the British recruiting authorities must be badly served by their medical officers if they take you for any sort of a soldier. You need not be alarmed by this. His point is that since you landed yourself such a cropper trying to ride over that unfortunate ox four or five years ago, your right arm, whether you know it or not, has been out of action for all military purposes. Ahearn believes that you could not possibly handle a rifle nor turn the starting-handle of an engine with a stiff compression. So it seems that after all there is nothing doing."

Chapter Twenty-Five

MAJOR MACFADDEN SMITH

ADAM sat looking wistfully at Mr. Macarthy's letter conveying to him the opinion of Dr. Ahearn. His first feeling of relief that he should be spared the dabbling of his hands in blood, of his own or others, was drowned in a sudden revulsion of emotion when he realised that if Dr. Ahearn was right the lists of the Great War were for ever closed against him. Incredible as it was even to himself, now that he appeared to be debarred from all share in the conflict, his need to plunge into it waxed hot. All through the Sunday it burned, yet by Monday its glow was not so intense that he was fired to a decision. For the dread of being called on to take life yet outweighed all other misgivings and still haunted his dreams. Only once, within his remembrance, had he really wished to kill: that was at the sight of Macfadden, still believed by him in those days to be his father, beating his mother. If he had seen with his own eyes the German soldiers in Belgium . . .

But then Mr. Macarthy said that the soldiers of every nation brutalised women if they got the chance: even Irish soldiers! . . . After all, Macfadden was an Irishman and kicked his wife, and he had seen Irish policemen twisting the arms off women. Was it worse to kiss a woman than to kick her? . . . Perhaps from her husband's point of view. . . . Even in peace the world was a welter of beastliness and cruelty. Did war make it so much worse? . . . The papers answered "Yes!" Peace

In London

brutalised and slew its thousands, but war its thousands of thousands. Millions of lives were blasted not only in fiery battlefield and pestilent camping ground, but in the very cradle.

English people did not realise the abomination of war ; for it seldom unmasked in their streets. This war had brought them an immediate fraudulent prosperity, and if babes wanted milk they had wanted it no less in peace time for lack of the means to pay for it. Now the money that might have gone on milk for them, had there been milk to buy, filled the picture palaces with their elders. The upper classes, too, unable to spend their money on filling their stomachs, lavished it in the purchase of such mental pabulum as *What Rot!* After eighteen months' run *What Rot!* awoke in the autumn like a giant refreshed and was going stronger than ever.

On the Monday Mr. Onsin, who had heard a rumour of Adam's desire to join the army, sent for him : " Look here," he said, " this is all nonsense. You're bound to me in honour for the run of the piece." He was making-up for his famous impersonation of Lord Algy as he spoke.

Adam, already dressed to go on, and looking the picture of youthful albeit painted innocence, answered in a childish voice : " But I may have to join the army."

" No fear," said the actor positively. " Lord Bulwark has promised the missus to see to that." He added genially : " We've found some use for the old huckster."

Adam was disinclined to avail himself of the amorous war-lord's condescending dishonesty, and with a firmer tone answered : " Legally, I dare say I couldn't be made to go, but I think perhaps I ought."

" Why ? " Mr. Onsin queried sharply.

Major Macfadden Smith

Adam now gave the lamer answer that it was a question of his conscience.

Mr. Onsin caught him up smartly. "Conscience, forsooth! Your conscience should tell you that you're bound to me," and with a sudden crash of his hand on the dressing-table, he rasped out: "I'm not to be trifled with. If you leave me in the lurch after all I've done for you and go romancing off to this damned war, I'll see, if you ever come back, that you never get a London engagement again."

Adam's temper caught flame from his. "I'm an Irishman," he cried, "and I'll go where I like, and I'll do what I like, and you and London can be damned together."

Whereupon to his astonishment Mr. Onsin burst into laughter. "The illusions of youth," he cried. "My missus has only to tell Bulwark that she wants you here at this theatre, and if you go to enlist you'll simply be locked up and put in the cells with a sentry over you until you promise to come back here with your tail between your legs at half the money I'm giving you now. So much for that."

"I don't believe it," Adam cried, but the manager's downright tone overawed him.

Mr. Onsin tossed his head: "Believe me or not," said he, "you can have a week's holiday to try."

Adam was fairly staggered, and answered doubtfully, "I don't want a holiday, if I go, I go."

"Answered like a man," said the great actor heartily. "Don't go. I'll make it worth your while not to. I won't conceal from you that *What Rot!* is the biggest success I've ever had, one of the biggest successes in the history of the theatre, and between ourselves I'm not blind to the fact that after my wife and myself you have as much a share in it as any one. You're helping to keep up the country's courage far better here than you would in the trenches, where as likely as not you'd just be

In London

drowned for nothing. That's what happens to the bantams, you know, they're not shot, they're just drowned. . . ." Having allowed this to sink in, he sprang up fully dressed to go on and clapped his hand on Adam's shoulder: "Take fifteen pounds a week and let the army go to hell. We needn't make any fresh contract, but so long as you remain in my theatre during the run of this play you'll find fifteen pounds in the treasury for you every Friday." He put his arm through Adam's. "That's settled, let's go down together."

So Adam woke up the next morning with two hundred and fifty pounds a year added to his ill-gotten gains, to compensate for the injury to his conscience. And his prestige in the theatre was vastly increased. Had not the great manager walked arm in arm with him to the lift and from the lift to the stage? Had he not also put up his salary fifty per cent.? Either of these tokens of appreciation would have added to his importance. Taken together they doubled it; for Mr. Onsin often flattered actors who wished their salary put up, but he seldom or never put up their salaries and flattered them too: indeed an increase of salary was almost invariably accompanied by a mark of contempt. Clearly Mr. Onsin valued Adam Quinn's services at far more than he paid him: the rumour got about that the Box Office reckoned Adam as worth fifty pounds a week. The extra ladies (with understudies) who received fifty shillings, all agreed that Mr. Quinn was deplorably underpaid at fifteen pounds, or, as many believed, twenty-five.

To Adam himself the extra five pounds were a source of shameful joy. He could not conceal from himself that they coloured his view of life: he knew that he was being bribed and cajoled into the abandonment of what might have proved to be his duty. After all he did not know positively that he was not fit to be a soldier: he did not know

Major Macfadden Smith

positively that if he were fit to be a soldier a conspiracy between the Onsins and Lord Bulwark could not merely frustrate him but turn his noble gesture into a contemptible one. In his heart he did not believe it, but his brain was titillated by the extra money into defending the possibility of such a fiasco.

So another week drifted on while he exchanged further letters with his guardian. "This is the clearest case," wrote Mr. Macarthy, "of virtue being its own reward. But I think I should feel easier in my mind, were I in your place, if I spent a trifle of my unearned increment in finding out whether I were really fit for military service or no. Dr. Ahearn reminds me that he is primarily a physician, and would not undertake to say definitely that the lesion from which you suffer is incurable. In the life which you seemed likely to lead when he treated you after your accident it could not have affected you in any way, so he did not advise me to bring you to a consultant. If you would care to go to one now, he says that Macfadden Smith of Devonshire Street (you will find the exact address in the Telephone Book; remember, being a surgeon, you will address him as Esquire simply), would be quite a good man for you to see if he hasn't been sent to sweep out stables in Mesopotamia. Ahearn knows him from the days when he was House Surgeon at the Royal Free and a great dab at mending football fractures. If you mention Ahearn's name, that will be sufficient if he's there, and if he's away his secretary, or whoever represents him, will probably advise you whom you had better see."

Adam communicated with Mr. Macfadden Smith, writing from the theatre but giving his address as care of Miss Durward in Norfolk Square. The next morning, at breakfast with that lady, the telephone bell rang and Miss Durward, stretching out her hand to the receiver, told Adam that Mr. Sackville wanted him.

In London

"He's in Edinburgh," Adam protested, rising doubtfully from his place.

"Wherever he is, my dear," Miss Durward answered as one who knew better, "he's holding the line for you to talk to him."

So Adam went to the telephone and said: "Adam Quinn speaking, is that you, Arthur Sackville?"

A voice uncommonly like Sackville's sang back in Adam's ears: "No, it's not, but I happen to be his brother."

"Oh," said Adam, disconcerted, "no bad news, I hope?"

There was a buzz of laughter: "I hope not, I'm Macfadden Smith."

"Oh," said Adam, "the doctor?"

"No, no, no," the receiver vibrated with emotion, "the surgeon."

"I beg your pardon," Adam cried, and through the telephone Mr. Macfadden Smith forgave him and made an appointment for the following morning at eleven.

Although Mr. Macfadden Smith's voice was so like his brother's that Miss Durward had taken it for granted that it was the latter who had summoned Adam to the telephone, he bore no great resemblance in the flesh to the actor. He was in fact a great, big, hearty man, and in khaki, being a major in the R.A.M.C. on leave from the Western Front, looked far more like a soldier than a leech. But he impressed Adam as knowing his job, and when after a long and dexterous manipulation of the muscles of Adam's right arm, he said phlegmatically: "Some army doctors would class you A1, but I am prepared to say that if you are ever fit for military service it won't be within the next five years." Adam felt that a Daniel had come to judgment. He felt, too, that though he might, through the stupidity of some official, be sent to the Front, he was justified,

206

Major Macfadden Smith

in England's interest as well as his own, in avoiding such a possibility.

With an aspect perhaps more crestfallen than was absolutely sincere, Adam murmured: "Then you really think I should be worse than useless in the army?"

"Physically worse than useless," the major assured him, "and what you might be otherwise, you may take it from me, you would never get the chance to show."

Adam was emboldened by this to go on in the same tone: "You'd call it downright silly of me to try to enlist?"

The major, if less obviously sentimental than his artistic brother, rivalled him in kindness and out-rivalled him in the heartiness of its display. For Adam's willingness to throw up the delights of London in war time for the infelicity of the fighting line he expressed a greater admiration than the recipient could plume himself on deserving: "I call it simply magnificent," he boomed down to Adam from his superior altitude of ten inches, "but I am glad to say, as a famous British officer said on I forget what occasion: 'It is not war.'"

Adam could not refrain from telling him that it was the politely expressed censure of a French general on the imbecility of a British staff at the skirmish of Balaclava.

The surgeon nodded. "I know, I know," and in a palpable imitation of his brother's voice he roared: "Half a league, half a league onward, all in the valley of death rode the seventeenth Lancers and the eleventh Hussars. . . . The Death or Glory Boys and the Cherubims, as they call them when they call them nothing worse. . . . I'm afraid I'm boring you."

This last was called for by the expression of Adam's eyes, which suddenly visualised an outside car bowling along Stephen's Green, and on it Caroline

In London

Brady and an eleventh Hussar with cherry overalls jauntily bright in the gray street. In a flash he recalled the jealous fury that made him wish Caroline Brady was dead. . . . And the gods had given him that wish, but not until Caroline had first given him herself.

His eyes filled with tears, and the major, cordially misunderstanding him, blew his nose in sympathy and said: "What a glorious little chap you are. Would it cheer you up to dine with me on Sunday night at the club?" He added with obvious doubt: "The National Liberal Club."

Not knowing what else to say, Adam said that he was sure he would find it most enheartening, so that was settled.

Chapter Twenty-Six

A BOLT FROM THE BLUE

ADAM's conception of a club was derived from his intimate acquaintance with the Muses Club in Dublin and one or two flying visits with Mr. Sackville to the Green Room: except the Green Room the only London club which he so much as knew by appearance was the Athenæum, and might not have known that but for its classic frieze catching his eye every day on his way to the theatre. It seemed to him a prodigious building, apparently roomier than the Kildare Street which in his youth he had taken for a rival hostelry to the Shelbourne. His imagination failed to endue these barracks with club life. The National Liberal Club, driven by the war into exile in Victoria Street, reminded him at the first glance of a railway station, and when a page boy was sent wailing through the premises the name of Major Macfadden Smith as if that worthy man were a destination for which a train was about to depart, this impression deepened. But when his host sate him down at a comfortable table, in a spacious room decorated with pictures rather larger than life of political nonentities who had left their footprints in the quicksands of time, a cosier feeling stole through his veins.

Being Sunday evening, the great dining-hall was comparatively empty, and they had a waitress all to themselves, who hung on the lips of the huge warrior-surgeon as devotionally as if he were the portly ghost of Lord Kitchener. . . . "I used often to be taken for K.K. when I first got into khaki," he mentioned

In London

to Adam with modest pride. "Mugs who couldn't see that our badges were different. . . . Of course he was old enough to be my father. In point of fact we were both bachelors." He tossed off a glass of sherry and said gravely: "The only woman I ever loved. . . . Just like Kitchener."

"Like your brother, too," Adam suggested.

Major Macfadden Smith nodded like a hearse horse; his neck being longer than Lord Kitchener's, enabled him to do this. "Thereby hangs a tale. Tragic story. The only woman we ever loved. One and the same. . . . Have another glass of sherry. We're rationed in food except offal, but you can drink as much as you like. . . . Most tragic, I call it. So does dear old Arthur. Admirable tragedian, don't you think?"

"I've never seen him in tragedy," Adam answered apologetically, "but I'm sure he'd be awfully good in everything."

"Magnificent," the surgeon asserted, "his Romeo is top-hole."

"He never told me he played Romeo," Adam confessed.

"I don't think he did," said the surgeon, "but I've known him rehearse it. That speech about Queen Mab."

"Isn't that Mercutio?" Adam suggested.

"Surely not?" the major returned. "The fellow who gets killed in the duel and says 'Damn both families,' that's Romeo?"

Adam expressed his opinion that in the more authoritative text Romeo killed himself.

Enlightenment came into his host's puzzled eyes: "I believe you're right. Of course you are. I remember now. Romeo kills Juliet and then himself. 'No way but this killing myself to die upon a kiss . . . ' Shakespeare's prose is the finest poetry in the world. I'm afraid there's no more bread, have some sherry. I never read anything

A Bolt from the Blue

now but the *British Medical Journal*: *The Lancet* is rather frivolous, though it's a good name. In France one has no time even for that. All I read there is Miss Marie Corelli. Have you ever heard of her? I find she makes me think. A scientific man should not be a materialist. So many are. Dear old Arthur sent me Miss Marie Corelli's works because she lived at Stratford-on-Avon. . . . Has Arthur ever told you what a tragedy his life has been? You're too young to understand. There's nothing like the love of a beautiful woman. Beautiful and good. I can honestly say I'd rather dear old Arthur had her than I. Between ourselves I know that she preferred me, being interested in surgery. It was a great privilege to work with her. There I had the advantage over him, but I can honestly say that I never used it. I always put his claim on her before my own. She never married any more than Arthur and myself. Damned odd what women will do. And yet . . . Have some sherry."

Adam seized the momentary pause to say that he drank little.

"Quite right," said the surgeon. "The less one drinks the better one is, except in moderation. I was telling you about my brother's love affair. Dear old Arthur. He never drinks. Upon my honour I sometimes think he never does anything. At school . . . The artistic temperament. I'm not artistic, I know it, but I can appreciate Miss Marie Corelli. I don't care whether she lives at Stratford-on-Avon or not. I think you said you didn't care for sherry? We'll try some port. No port? Come, I'll have to drink it by myself. No wonder you're interested in dear Arthur. Splendid tragedian. You said it wasn't Romeo. That reminds me. I know a man in France who has rooms in the Temple he wants to let, Plowden Buildings. Any use to you? I've got the key. You can have them

In London

at your own price. He may be dead by now, and what's it matter?"

Adam's interest was awakened. "Are they furnished?" he asked.

"Furnished?" the major cried. "I should think so. Beautifully furnished. They're at the top of the building, and there's a bath hot and cold in the bedroom, and you can go out straight on the tiles. Mind you don't fall off, and what more do you want? You can have them at your own price." He blew his nose. "I love those rooms. It was in that bedroom with the bath in it that I first met the only woman. Elderly K.C., gallstones. Most handy having the bath there. So few in the Temple. And she and I stood on the tiles and . . . How well I remember the face of Big Ben. Tolling midnight. You would understand me better if you knew her."

"If the lady you mean is Miss Nightingale, I know her a little," Adam enjoyed telling him.

"My God!" said the surgeon, clapping his hand to his forehead, "I may have said too much." He told the waitress to bring some soda water, and went on after he had tossed off a glass: "You understand that my conversation with Miss Nightingale on the roof of Plowden Buildings was purely professional. In those days I was not a consultant, though my success in that case, not properly one for me at all, but thanks to that glorious woman I muddled through, gave me the chance I wanted. Elderly K.C.'s great friend, famous Law-Lord's son, biffed arm playing polo. Top sawyers all turned him down. Hopeless. Elderly K.C. suggested me. I sent for Miss Nightingale, and between us we somehow brought it off. She says to this day there was nothing wrong with the arm really. Patient of that kind is very baffling to a specialist. Hardest thing in the world to diagnose is nothing at all. That's where a woman comes in. I owe everything in the world to Miss Nightingale. I wish you knew

A Bolt from the Blue

her, but of course you do. Look here, you can have those rooms for nothing. I'll pay the rent of them myself. Can't bear to think of some one living there that would dishonour them. Or look here, not to make a favour of it, you shall pay what you can afford. Say ten shillings a week."

Adam warmly declared that if he liked the rooms he would be prepared to pay one pound a week for them.

"A pound a week," his host replied, "they're worth ten pounds at least. I pay seven, but what does it matter? We may all be dead to-morrow. And I've said you shall have them for ten shillings, not a penny more."

"It's not a question of what they're worth," Adam said, "it's a question of what I can afford to pay."

His host looked at him with eyes that were alternately lack-lustre and radiant. "I understand," he said; "we'll compromise. We'll say guineas." He thrust his hand in his pocket and produced a ring from which with strong and nimble hand, oddly out of keeping with his now muzzy speech, he detached a key. "There! For sweet Jane Nightingale's sake, keep it and use it. Never mind about a cheque; any time will do. We may all be dead to-morrow."

Adam was staring at the proffered key, wondering what course to follow when their waitress fluttered up, obviously unhappy. "Please, there's an air-raid warning and we must put out the lights in a few minutes." The key clinked on Adam's plate as a convulsive movement of his host's elbow swept the empty port bottle off the table. "My God!" said he, "will the Boches never leave me alone?" Tears filled his eyes. "They have a down on me, the Boches."

"Aren't they awful?" said the little waitress, "and on Sunday too."

In London

"No religion, no anything," said the surgeon, "gross materialists. Can I have a liqueur?"

"They can bring it to you in the basement," said the waitress, "we can't serve anything more here. All the upper part of the club is closed for fear of bombs."

"My God!" said the surgeon. "Bombs! As if I hadn't had enough bombs in France."

"I suppose," said Adam sympathetically, "you get a lot of bombing in France?"

"In France," said the surgeon solemnly, "you get everything all the time and so you don't think about it. But when it comes to being bombed in London, I protest, I protest. In London there are women and children."

"But in France," said Adam, "there are women and children."

The surgeon nodded. "True, and in Germany, and . . ." he thought for a long time and said with great distinctness: "There are men and women and children, and I dare say ladies and gentlemen, in Mesopotamia. What of that? What I protest against is the Boches being here."

The manager approached. "I'm afraid, sir, we really must put out the light."

The major looked at him. "'Put out the light and then put out the light,'" he intoned, and added thoughtfully: "Miss Marie Corelli." As the manager still stood expectant, as though the mention of the distinguished novelist were insufficient, he rose and said: "Basement in the liqueurs."

"Liqueurs in the basement?" said the manager. "Certainly, if you touch the bell down there."

"Thank you," said the major, then dropping his hand confidentially on the manager's shoulder he said: "Don't go to the Front, I can see you're unfit. Rheumatoid Arthritis."

The manager's respect became more real. "Is that what it's called, sir? I've often wondered."

A Bolt from the Blue

"Thought I was drunk, did he?" said the surgeon as they crossed the hall, now sepulchrally gloomy with the welled staircase in darkness. In the distance could be heard that thudding with which Adam's life in London had made him familiar. "He may have it, he may not. Point is, I said Rheumatoid Arthritis."

Down below in the basement all exterior sounds were drowned by a little choir of the waitresses singing hymns. Adam knew very few, but he recognised as he sat beside his host, who after drinking his Benedictine was lulled to sleep by the music:—

"Jesus loves me that I know
For the Bible tells me so.
Little ones to Him belong
They are weak but He is strong."

The words recalled to Adam the last day he had spent in Dublin, that Dublin which since his departure had been so battered by the ubiquitous fist of war, and he was trying to picture to himself the new aspect of its shell-riven and burnt-out streets, when a crash shook the building to its foundations, and the psalm-singers stopped with a shriek.

"If that bomb had got us," some one said, and faces paled, those that were not pale already. But the major slept on, protected from fear by the roar of his own snoring. An hour passed in silence, at first anxious, but gradually gathering calm. Then two rumours spread: First that the bomb had got Victoria Station and secondly that the All-clear signal had been heard. Adam looked at his wrist-watch: It was past ten, and he felt so tired that if his host did not wake he was determined to steal away without disturbing him.

"Yes," that worthy's voice boomed suddenly in his ear, "I shall always bless the day when first I met Miss Jane Nightingale. For her I would give

In London

the little that is left of my life and the whole of my professional career. . . . Only to see dear old Arthur happy."

Adam was interested. "With her?" he asked.

"If you really knew Arthur," said his host, "as I know him, you would understand that he could never be happy without."

"Do you suggest," Adam asked, "that he is unhappy?"

"Tragic!" boomed the surgeon, "a born tragedian, Romeo."

"The All-clear has sounded," said Adam.

The big man roused himself. "My God!" he cried, "have the Boches been over again? Taking photographs or what?"

"They couldn't be taking photographs at this hour?" Adam suggested.

The major looked at his watch. "Eleven o'clock. A.M. or P.M.?"

"P.M.," said Adam.

"Ah!" said the major sagely, "what the French call twenty-three. Wonderfully practical people. Surgical instruments shocking and no lint. Seen tourniquets made of newspaper. Want to go already? All right, I'm with you. Let's go and have a wash first."

After he had buried his great head in a basin full of cold water the major was markedly sober. "Let's stroll across Parliament Square to the Underground."

"It will be shorter," said the major pensively as they regained the vestibule and found it still in darkness: "It will be shorter if we go out at the back." He paused to ask the porter: "No taxis about yet?"

"Nothing doing in taxis, sir. I see an ambulance go by. Only wheeled traffic to speak of," said the man judicially.

The major hesitated, looking out towards Victoria Street, his ears caught by a rush of lumbering wheels.

Bolt from the Blue

The porter shot a glance through the drawn blinds. "That's an Eleven 'bus. Didn't stop at the corner. Wants to get home."

"Naturally," said the major, "so do we all. Blighty the only word. . . . No, you needn't open the door. We're going out by Tothill Street." To Adam he added as they descended the steps once more: "We may be able to jump on a 'bus at the corner of Whitehall, and if not it's only across the road to the Underground at Westminster. We can change at Charing Cross to the Bakerloo. Raids don't affect them."

"Except when you can't get up or down for the crowd," Adam laughed. To him a raid was still an agreeable excitement.

"Use it as a dug-out, do they?" the major said as one disagreeably impressed. "I heard that but I didn't believe it. Sort of thing you read in *Punch*. Like the curate's egg, not necessarily true. I was dreaming just now that Miss Nightingale and I were in a dug-out together. The Boches were putting some heavy stuff over, and she fainted, and Arthur and I carried her in. You know what dreams are. I suppose I must have been asleep."

A full moon was flooding Westminster as they emerged from Tothill Street. The night was silent now save for the muffled chatter of groups of pedestrians hurrying on their way. Outside Westminster Hospital stood an ambulance, no doubt the sole wheeled traffic heard by the porter in Victoria Street. By it in the shadow were two vague figures, the only living beings not in motion.

Adam coughed and the major also cleared his throat: the Abbey was engulfed in waves of gunpowder gas which drifted on a slow breeze across Broad Sanctuary. The effect was of fantastic beauty.

"Imagine the Huns bombing St. Margaret's," Adam's companion protested. "Rheims was bad

In London

enough. All this air business is very wrong. Our fellows try to avoid buildings as much as possible. Of course it can't be done, but it shows a decent English spirit. One young lad I know got a religious procession at Frankfort, but he managed to avoid the church. Miss Nightingale is very religious. She wanted to be a Cowley sister. . . . I shouldn't like to see her bombed even by one of our own fellows. . . . Damned if I don't think I'd rather be blown to bits myself, and as for dear old Arthur . . . I believe that chauffeur's a girl from the set of her shoulders." They were almost beside the ambulance now, and the figures came up less vaguely against the tail-board. Adam opened his mouth to say that both were women, when the sky blazed an instant, and as his ear-drums shivered to a resounding crash, his knees knocked together, and his lower jaw sent his teeth convulsively up into his tongue.

Then he saw his friend bolting with elephantine strides, his head thrown forward, back to the club. All the pedestrians had taken to their heels as though the groups had been disrupted by the concussion of the bomb. And the night was hideous with the Bedlamite fury of artillery flinging molten fire at the moon. Yet in the very foreground of the picture was Peace and Mercy symbolised by two gracious figures: the women at the ambulance. The one Adam perceived was Miss Nightingale: the other, the chauffeur, his doubting eyes assured him was Woodbine Blake.

Both looked at, but neither recognised him: their nerves were too highly strung for casual greetings. Another bomb shook the earth, but the sight of these two calm women steadied his desire to run, and he trudged deliberately down Tothill Street, despite a spray of shrapnel rattling in the roadway, and safely reached St. James's, his most convenient station.

Chapter Twenty-Seven

IN THE TEMPLE

As Adam descended to the platform of the Underground station, the crash of explosives became merged in the roar of wheels and the grinding of brakes. The Inner Circle trains with lights switched off were running, or rather crawling, in their accustomed orbit; and, as Adam's entered the tunnel leading to Victoria, the thunder of constructive mechanism seemed finally to war down the thunder of destructive. When he left the train at Praed Street his ear caught no certain echo of aerial combat. The station was sunk in gloom as sepulchral as St. James's Park; but in Norfolk Square the brilliant moon had a chance to compensate more than adequately for the absence of artificial light. The brasses of Miss Durward's door reflected its glory as Adam thrust key in lock and surprisedly failed to turn it.

He tried again and failed, and once again. Then, troubled that he might be suffering from shell-shock or intoxication, he withdrew the key and examined it in the moonlight, closely enough to prove that it was not his own key. . . . That was in his pocket. . . . He had been trying to let himself in with the key of the chambers once occupied by eminent Counsel at the top of Plowden Buildings. . . . The chambers that might be his virtually for the asking. . . . That is, if Major Macfadden Smith held the same view about him when sober as when tipsy. . . . Then he remembered something about guineas which seemed inconsistent with the first offer.

In London

It would appear to be his immediate duty to ring up the major and advise him that the key was safe in his possession. He went to the telephone for this purpose, when the clock on Miss Durward's mantelpiece striking midnight, determined him to wait till morning. So he returned the key to the pocket of his evening waistcoat. And in the morning he had forgotten all about it. And so apparently had the major: the key lay undisturbed until two Sundays later, when Adam donned the waistcoat that he might go to dine with the lady who had indirectly led to its being in his possession.

But ere that Sunday came a fortnight had passed, much widening Adam's experience. For the first thing he had done on Monday morning was to study in Miss Durward's chosen journal the advertisements of those learned in the lore of motor-cars and prepared for a consideration to communicate their experience. For a time he hovered between one that seemed to offer the mastery of the automobile world for a bagatelle, and another which proposed to charge him stiffly for a lesser but still, as he understood, adequate knowledge of driving and mechanism. Possibly for the reason that the map showed it to be situate within a quarter mile of Miss Nightingale's flat, Adam chose the latter garage. He did not sit down to lunch until he had invited it to send him further particulars. And on Tuesday morning a handsome pamphlet, in itself justifying high charges, lay upon his breakfast plate. The engaging photographs in this work, showing attractive young ladies dissecting, under the guidance of affable and talented engineers, the priviest entrails of massive motor-cars apparently no worse for the trying experience, won Adam's heart. And that very afternoon he found time to visit the office, where he formally agreed to commence the study of this mystery in the early morning of the following Monday. After

In the Temple

he had paid the first instalment of his fees he was warned, as an afterthought, that while he was free to hear the principles of the petrol engine and its handling exhaustively demonstrated, it was impossible owing to the shortage of petrol to guarantee that he would ever actually be able to drive a car in a manner satisfactory even to himself. This a little damped Adam's ardour and made him feel the need of Mr. Macarthy's presence, but in as much as he had paid three guineas, never, as he conjectured to be seen again, he decided to pursue the adventure.

He did not regret it, nor the new world in which he found himself that Monday morning, as he left the train at Victoria and made his way through the smelly streets of Pimlico to the Eaton-Ebury Motor Training School. There he found himself amidst sprightly lasses and would-be sprightly if elderly lads, with a sprinkling of the genuine youth of Britain eager to fly ere they well could walk; and all learnedly discussing the merits of the many types of engines they had never handled, nor perhaps (owing to the shortage of petrol) ever would. He felt as might an unconverted Gentile among zealous catechumens. He strove to harmonise himself with his environment by mentioning such facts as he could remember about Dr. Ahearn's Ford, but quickly realised that the interest he roused was not complimentary. He blushed when one young impertinent demanded to know if Dublin had nothing more like a car than a Tin Lizzy. For the moment he had an odd feeling of being once more a little boy just entered at Belvedere. Remembering that from the first he had worked hard at his lessons there, he made up his mind to do no less now.

On the Tuesday night Mrs. Onsin complained that he ruined her great scene in the third act of *What Rot!* wherein it was his duty to be seen but not

In London

heard, while she poured forth a tirade against faithless lovers falsely true, by muttering without cease the devastating words: "Induction, Compression, Explosion, Exhaust . . ." "If I only knew what it meant!" the fair Belinda cried, "I might have stood it better."

"It means," said her husband with unusual aptness of irony, "Quinn took you for a gas-engine."

But Adam modestly explained that he was so hypnotised by the force of her acting that he unconsciously repeated his lessons; and on promising never more to allow himself to be so moved by her art, he was forgiven. He was still a favourite with his manageress, though she had long since ceased to coquette with him, protesting that he was (even as Miss Durward alleged of Tomasso) "No earthly." Although Miss Durward had urged more than fully the advantages to be derived from it, Adam had never brought himself even to flirt with Mrs. Onsin, nor could he persuade himself that she desired it. To him she bore a rather painful likeness to his mother as he remembered her in the beginning, ere drink had destroyed her vulgar comeliness. Made up to match the lighting, Belinda looked plump and appetising in that great theatre; but daylight betrayed her contours as bulging where they should not and her complexion as a crude example of plastic art. When peace should free a younger generation of critics to push the dug-outs from the stalls, she was clearly doomed to be written off and filed as a back number.

That first week at the garage Adam found strange the difference between the apparently strenuous labour of the neophyte engineers dismounting and reassembling motors in the shops, and the hustling make-believe of a play which too prolonged success had sapped of its vitality. Yet, as slowly came home to him, the labour of the Eaton-Ebury garage was largely make-believe too, and the engines whose

In the Temple

valves enthusiastic young beauties ground and magnetos ingenious Portias timed, if they had ever urged a living car along the road, would do so never again.

Dining with Miss Nightingale he loosed his tongue in praise of his new interest; and Miss Nightingale with tempered warmth (or what seemed warmth in that cold room) encouraged him. She was a devotee of the politer writings of Mr. Kipling, and on this occasion appeared to share his mystical faith in the spiritual triumph of machinery over men. Not that Miss Nightingale was pettily consistent in her admiration of Mr. Kipling. Mr. Macarthy had once decoyed her into saying that the Piccadilly Tube was more to be admired than Shakespeare's sonnets; but she never concealed the opinion that Robert Louis Stevenson was in every way superior to his mechanical relatives and second only in importance among "Englishmen" to Mr. Ruskin. For the rest, her arguments were always phrased with such distinction and air of reserve that one felt that there must be something behind them which to him who might win her heart, and to him alone, could be divulged.

Adam found it the most delightful evening he had spent with her, and came away feeling that he had risen much in her estimation. As she was letting him out he chanced to touch the second latchkey in his pocket and said: "Oh, by the way, did you ever meet Arthur Sackville's brother?"

"I have met Mr. Macfadden Smith, the surgeon," she said simply, and the brevity of her answer damped Adam's desire to take her opinion about the rooms in Plowden Buildings. As it were, realising an awkwardness in his silence, she volunteered the information that the major had returned to the Western Front, and added: "He told me how plucky you had been about your arm."

Adam heroically pooh-poohed his arm. "Only,

In London

of course," he said with breezy pathos, "it's hard lines at my age to know there's no hope of reaching the firing-line."

His hostess looked at him sweetly. "The war may be going on for a long time," she said, "and Mr. Macfadden Smith quite shares my view that massage might make it flexible enough for all practical purposes in a year or two."

Adam was not sure whether he quavered the words: "How ripping that would be. . . ." It seemed to him he reached the street immediately after that; and instead of making his way directly home, he jumped on the first 'bus he saw in Victoria Street. As he climbed on the roof he noticed that it was an Eleven going east; and handing the conductor twopence (in those days when 'bus riding was not confined to the wealthy) was franked as far as Chancery Lane. But he did not travel quite so far, for seeing the Middle Temple gate opening to admit a taxi, as the 'bus swept under the Law Courts' clock he was moved by some unaccountable impulse to plunge down to the roadway, and with an easy nod and mutter of "Plowden Buildings" to the janitor closing the gate, he passed on down Middle Temple Lane.

He had never been within the precincts of the Temple before, and as the bolts shot behind him was conscious of a pang of misgiving as to how he should get out again. He might have turned to retrace his steps but for the dread of rousing the janitor's suspicions. Deciding that his safest course was to go to the address he had mentioned and presently return with the air of one who has paid a somewhat late evening call. The Law Courts' clock had gone eleven. But where, when all was said and done, was Plowden Buildings? Forgetting that it had been at its zenith a fortnight ago, he vaguely hoped for the moon to pierce a cloud and light him on his way; the war-time lamps of the

In the Temple

Temple discreetly revealed nothing. . . . Until he came to a pile appearing to reach the clouds whereon was revealed to him by glimmering gas a figure he thought might be eight. That was not the number that he wanted, but there were other letterings that he thought daylight might force to reveal the identity of Plowden Buildings. So here he lingered, pondering what to do next. He was roused by a faint bang high above him, as though one of the smaller gates of heaven had been blown to by a draught. There followed the high-pitched tinkle of a young woman's voice, punctuated by a manly growl implying weariness of conversation, and light steps and heavy first pattered and then reverberated down a wooden staircase. A change in the character of the sounds told that the feet had reached stone paving. Hidden in the lane, Adam saw a man and a woman, the former wearing khaki, which not even the softening shades of night could blend with his figure, and the latter dressed also in the costume of the period, were at once swallowed in obscurity, the lady becoming silent, perhaps under compulsion, as they moved towards Fleet Street.

Adam told himself that discretion ordained that he should follow them: for if they went out unquestioned, why not he? . . . Then he recalled reading in the pages of George Moore something that would imply that life in the Temple was not so cloistral as the name of that famous place portended. He no longer dreaded the janitor's *Ne exeat* . . . he was even emboldened, as it were, by the fluttering gesture of half-remembered paragraphs from the pen of that compatriot to seek adventure. He penetrated to the hall of the building and, striking a match, read painted on the wall some famous names that meant nothing to him, but also the information that one set of chambers on the top floor still stood in the name (albeit painted so long ago as to be hardly decipherable) of Sir Levi Lee,

In London

K.C. . . . He asked himself was that Sir Levi Lee but just gone up the road, and decided that the figure, however remote from martial, could not have been that of an elderly advocate. . . . Nor was it to be supposed that the too vocal gentlewoman who accompanied him was Lady Lee. . . . The finger from the past urged him up the staircase. In its simple elegance it reminded him of nothing so much as that which through its failure to uphold his manly form, when in anger, had put a term to the existence of his putative father. He reached the top breathless, to find himself in front of two doors: that on the right hand bore several names above it, but on the left, that of the noble Sir Levi warred in solitary dignity its battle against time.

Headlong now, Adam plunged Major Macfadden Smith's key in the lock, and, unacquainted with the habits of Temple doors, strove to push it in. It resisted his efforts, but yielded readily to his invitation to meet him. But within was another door, and Adam realised that he had merely penetrated that outer shell known to Templars and Collegers as the Oak. In the other scale he found encouragement in the form of a letter which had been dropped through the outer letter-box and was directed in a woman's handwriting to Major Macfadden Smith, R.A.M.C. Inspired by this to a Napoleonic grasp of possibilities, he thrust his hand through the letter-box of the inner door, and twiddling his forefinger, realised his expectation by contact with a piece of string. With a snap the door opened.

Then came reaction: peering into the ghostly darkness of those antique chambers, across the floor of which he could see the reflections of London's sky-quartermen search-lights whirling like phantom windmills, he was so conscious of utter silence that it might have eased his nerves had a raven on the portal quoth "Never more." But nothing so

In the Temple

American and fantastic could occur in those rooms in the apex of the monument to the most respectable of English jurists, the proverbial Plowden. Sir Levi Lee's fevered brain might have called up the spectre of a Mass priest, but no ghostly bird, unless the sacred Dove, in which it is only fair to Sir Levi to say, he would not have believed. Toeing the mat of those ancient chambers Adam felt not at all jocose: his great desire was to wheel about and run downstairs and out of the Temple as fast as he could go: he visualised himself at home with his head protected, as Miss Durward protected hers against welkin-riding Huns, but he remembered reading somewhere the Zulu saying: "If we go forward we die: if we go backward we die: better go forward and die." As a compromise he struck a match. This woke a comforting gleam from the brass switch of an electric lamp, and bravely Adam pressed it. He was at once reassured; for that ancient shell revealed itself as furnished in a manner as repulsive to self-respecting ghosts as the ingenuity of Tottenham Court Road could devise. Sir Levi Lee himself might have complained that his chambers, if they had gained in comfort since he left them, had suffered in character. On the other hand, Adam thought, his semi-demi kinswoman, Lady Derrydown, might have found it to her taste; for that masterpiece, "A Toi," would have felt more at home here than in Eaton Place.

Laughing at himself, Adam entered and closed the door behind him. If he wanted to get home to-night he would have to walk, and he was in no mood for so long a tramp. After all, the rooms were his in the absence of evidence to the contrary. Certainly Major Macfadden Smith would not object to his passing a night in them by way of trying how he liked them. . . . To pass the night. . . . He glanced up a flight of stairs ascending from the hall. The famous bedroom with the bath in it and the

In London

way out on to the roof must be up there. Below on a level with the hall were three doors : two closed and one open ; through the open doorway had come the reflection of the search-lights. That meant the blinds were not drawn and his electric lamp could attract the attention of those who were responsible for the shading of the Temple lights. He had better see to it that those blinds were drawn at once. . . .

Unhesitatingly he strode forward and entered the room where he now could clearly see three large windows, two in one wall and one in another, so he closed that door, too, behind him. As he did so he felt horribly that this time he really had shut himself off from the world he knew, and entered one in which he was not alone : he knew for sure that in that strange room in which there was enough light to see that it was different in every way from the rest, there was a familiar though unrecognisable presence. He was thrilled but not terrified. . . . Though one of the windows, for no reason that he could understand, conjured up a vision of the window through which his grandmother had gone to her end. . . . No, he was not frightened ; the presence in the room was not a hostile one ; deliberately he drew the curtains even of that sinister window. As he did so the wing of his evening cape swept some object from a table beside it, and it flapped down upon the floor. Striking a match to search for it, he saw that it was a book, that it had fallen open, and that from its pages the eyes of his grandfather, Sir Byron-Quinn, looked up at him, as they had once looked into the eyes of Lady Daphne Page who died Marchesa della Venasalvatica.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

ADAM IS OFFENDED

By the flickering light of the match Adam knelt in that high and lonely room staring at dead of night in the mysterious eyes of his grandfather, lost in battle half a generation before he was born. Then in a second the match went out and he was alone in the dark, still feeling those eyes meet his. . . . And yet he was not frightened. Lifting the book in his left hand, just as it had fallen open on the floor, he walked deliberately towards the door, counting on finding there a switch controlling the electric light. With that on, the room revealed itself as being unlike the others, because the walls were still panelled in oak, and against these panels Tottenham Court Road failed to do more than appear insignificant. But Adam was not concerned about the furniture nor even the room. What held him was the question how that book had come there : the first copy of Sir David Byron-Quinn's poems he had come across in England, though Lady Derrydown claimed to have one somewhere which, some day when occasion served, she would read.

His own copy of the poems, given him by the Marchesa as a Christmas present when he was a child just entering his teens and neither of them suspected their relationship, was not among the books Mr. Macarthy had sent him on from Dublin ; and he had felt a shyness in asking for it, knowing that his guardian modestly esteemed the baronet's muse, and seemed to think that but for his social position it might have blushed unheard. On the

In London

other hand, Mr. Arthur Sackville, to whom he had recited certain chosen excerpts as best he could remember them, had declared the poet to be one of the best, and inscribed his name on his shirtcuff, in those days a notable compliment. Recalling the actor's gesture as he drew his fountain pen, Adam guessed how the book had found its way into those chambers.

And rightly did he guess ; for on the flyleaf of the volume he read in the neat characters of Mr. Sackville this legend : " To my eminent and heroic brother 'Mac' on his fifty-first birthday, these beautiful poems by the grandfather of my friend, Adam Quinn, Esq., knowing that he will find in them sentiments after his own gallant and soft heart and head, from his only but truly artistic brother, Arthur Sackville Macfadden Smith. 17th June, 1917."

Adam sank into a saddle-bag chair, the book still in hand, and laughed with greater heartiness than he had felt for some time. He wished Mr. Macarthy were with him to share the joke ; for what had seemed so ominous and tragical, not to say downright supernatural, had suddenly become a mere ludicrous coincidence now that he guessed the chain of events leading up to it. The haunted room itself was now nothing more than an old-fashioned apartment with comparatively new-fashioned furniture, more comfortable than beautiful, and an upright grand piano. . . . All the same he did not feel like staring his grandfather in the face, so he closed the book and laid it on the table beside him when, by a process easy enough to understand, but uncanny to behold, it proceeded to open itself again until Adam caught sight of the words : " The Dead Lover." He knew the poem by heart ; for he had heard it for the first time on one of the most memorable days of his life, but he was impelled to take it up and read it again now.

Adam is Offended

“ When that I was alive there were women
that loved me ;
When that I was alive they loved only me ;
And that I could do no wrong was the
burden of the song
Of the dear good women that loved me.

Now that I am dead those good women
that loved me
Are sought by other lovers happily, oh,
happily,
And in my narrow bed I can hear as I lie
dead
Little feet that I have kissed dance lightly
over me.

Yet though in my grave I lie, I laugh
deliciously
At the foolish living lovers that are dancing
over me—
For the Queens of all their toasts are the
cold and careless ghosts
Of the women that have loved me and
are lying dead with me.”

He found himself trying to hum it to the tune which Barbara Burns had made for it and he had heard her sing for the first time as he read of the death of Caroline Brady. But the tune would not come. Laying down the book he went over to the piano and tried gently to finger it out there. . . . But the tune would not come. He closed the piano, conscious of a growing desire to sleep. His wrist-watch told him it was three o'clock in the morning, the room was very cold : he was overwhelmed with the desire to sleep, and remembered the bedroom upstairs. So up he went, switching on electric lights everywhere without misgiving. He saw that the room looked comfortable : he felt that the bed

In London

was comfortable: he drew off his boots and, without undressing, snuggled under an eiderdown and fell fast asleep. . . . He was wakened by the postman's knock to find daylight and the electric light struggling together.

At his age the instinct roused by the postman's knock was stronger than reason. He leaped from bed, ran downstairs, and picked up the letter. He was disappointed to find that it was not for him but for Major Macfadden Smith. On the other hand, he was interested to notice that it was directed in the same feminine hand as the letter he had found on the mat the night before: glancing at that, he found it must have been there a week, just missing the addressee. Then his wakened interest inquired why the major had his letters addressed to Plowden Buildings rather than Devonshire Street. . . . Did he lead a double life? . . . Fascinating thought, a double life. . . . But Adam thought that if he led a double life he would try to lead it a trifle less carelessly. . . . He felt the friendly thing to do would be to take the two letters with him and send them on to the major when writing to him, as he would at once, about the key. . . . About the key? . . . And what about his taking the chambers? He thought they would be well worth a pound a week or even more to him if the major really wished to let them, though why they should be worth anything to him he did not clearly know. It would be pleasant to be able to speak of "My chambers in the Temple," and even if he only kept them for a week or two he would still be entitled to refer to the time when he had chambers in that famous place. In short, it seemed to him to mark a fresh stage in the growth of manhood. . . . He thought he might at least have ten pounds' worth of being a Templar. Striking a chord on the piano, he was so impressed by the richness of its tone that he felt he could not offer the major less than two pounds a week, so

Adam is Offended

ten pounds would give him five glorious weeks, and no one in the world need ever know about it unless he told them ; for it did not occur to him that these rooms in the Temple would not keep themselves clean even though he should refrain from putting them to hard use.

Returning to the bedroom he found that the bath therein was heated from a geyser and the geyser workable, so with the delight of a child in a new toy he turned on the water, lit the gas, and was presently revelling in a hot bath. It was, however, somewhat of an anticlimax to find that he had failed to provide himself with a towel, and was reduced to getting into the bed, which fortunately was fully made, and drying himself between the sheets. This was a course the objections to which he perceived, but as a practical young gentleman he preferred it to catching cold. Presently, when he had dressed, he took the bed to pieces, hanging sheets and blankets over chairs to air. By this time it was nearly nine, his usual breakfast hour, and he was conscious of a vast appetite. So making sure that he had left things as nearly as possible as he had found them, the electric lights off and the curtains in the drawing-room opened and the piano closed, he took the two letters, ascertained that the key was in his pocket, and went out, banging both doors behind him.

In a few minutes he was back in Fleet Street, the Law Courts' clock holding out the information that he had been ten hours within the Temple gates : and turned west in search of the Temple Station, not knowing that his direct way to it would have been down Middle Temple Lane to the Embankment. Advised now by a constable to take the first street on the left, he turned into Essex Street, when his ever sharpening appetite halted him at the Express Dairy, and into that he went and demanded food. A poached egg on toast with a meagre scrap of

In London

bread and butter or some substitute, washed down with tea, kept him so occupied that he was slow to perceive that the waitresses made him the subject of much whispered conversation. When he did realise it, he flattered himself that they recognised in him an already famous young actor, until a chance phrase gave him a clue to the suspicion that they were making spicy jokes about his being in evening clothes at that hour of the day. The impropriety of his costume brought home to him, he buttoned his overcoat carefully and hurried on past the publishing offices in Essex Street, plunged down the steps to the Embankment, ran lightly through the few yards of garden, and so into the Temple Station and an Inner Circle train on the outer rail. Between there and Praed Street it occurred to him that this was the first time since he had been stopping at Miss Durward's that he had spent a night out. But despite the flutter of the waitresses at the sight of him in evening clothes, the full significance of this to the ordinary mind escaped him until he read in Tomasso's leering eyes a suspicion that offended him.

Still worse was it when Miss Durward herself called to him archly as he ascended the stairs: "You might have told me you were going on the tiles."

Adam marched hotly in upon her where she sat in her den checking her accounts, for it was Monday morning. "Did you speak to me?" he asked.

"Did I speak to you," Miss Durward drawled banteringly, "now, did I speak to you? If I did you ought to be flattered at my taking notice of you after being such a naughty boy. Some ladies I know would complain of your deserting them."

"I don't understand," said Adam shortly.

"La, la, la," laughed Miss Durward, "don't make a mystery of it to me. I didn't expect you to go on pretending to be my maiden aunt for ever.

Adam is Offended

It really isn't good for a young man, you know, to go on like that, whatever your chaste friend, Miss Nightingale, may say about it. For I don't suppose it was she kept you."

It seemed to Adam that, as Miss Durward spoke, her face, half-turned to him at an ugly angle, became utterly vile: and all the more so because it recalled his mother's as he could still remember it when she bantered his father covertly in the presence of her husband. "No woman kept me," said he.

"Don't try to get out of it by calling her a flapper," Miss Durward fleered. "What did she rook you for, anyway?"

The thought of women who sold their bodies filled Adam with pity; but of the men who bought them he thought with loathing; and the women who used their better fortune to jest at such transaction he looked on with horror and disgust. Miss Durward read something of this in his eye, but misinterpreted it. "Don't be a humbug," she sniggered, "and tell me you've been playing cards."

"I'll tell you nothing," Adam answered hotly, and went to his room.

After this scene between them he felt he could no longer remain under Miss Durward's roof; and he sat down at once, still in his evening clothes, to write to Major Macfadden Smith a formal proposal for the hire of his chambers in the Temple. But he had not satisfied himself with the opening phrase when he heard a tap at the door and found his hostess there smiling good-naturedly.

"It's all right, old man," she said, "only I was afraid you were ill."

Adam's tone was still stiff as he asked: "Why should you suppose I was ill?"

But she returned unruffled: "What about your garage?"

Adam's hands tore across his sheet of paper.

In London

“ The divil ! ” he cried, “ I’d forgotten.” And he added heartily : “ Thanks awfully, Miss Durward.”

In fact he had missed a lecture in mechanics, and, what was more serious, would miss his driving lesson if he lost another ten minutes. Keeping his shirt and collar, he changed his tie and outer garments, and within a quarter-hour was sailing along Praed Street on the Victoria bus.

Chapter Twenty-Nine

AT THE GARAGE

ADAM was just in time for his driving lesson ; as he approached the gate of the garage the Overland car wherein he took his lessons stole past him down the narrow street, allowing him a glimpse of a lady at the wheel beside the instructor. When he turned in at the gate he saw her tripping on nimble feet up the iron staircase to the shops, and found the effect as familiar as it was charming ; but she took no notice of him, and he could not see her face.

"Very nice little lady, that," said Mr. Gander Duval, Adam's instructor, as he noted his pupil's eye following his predecessor's heels. But to Adam's query if he knew who the nice little lady was, he stiffened, as reproving an indiscretion. "We never know who anybody's name is." He added cryptically : "Wastes petrol," then surrendered the wheel and banged to the door of the car. "Will you kindly reverse out of the yard."

Airily Adam opened with his right toe his throttle, and his flywheel revolving with what he deemed adequate power, his left hand slipped his lever into the rear notch engaging the Overland's gear. So far so good ; the car lurched backwards towards the gate and was almost through it when there was a nasty scraping sound and, to Adam's ears, the yet nastier sound of ladylike laughter. He had allowed his off fore-wing to draggle against the gate, from which it seemed unwilling to part company. In the effort to save it by a rapid change to first gear he called from the machinery beneath his feet a

In London

protestant groan. . . . And he blushed to find that his engine had stopped.

"What are you thinking of this morning?" Mr. Duval inquired with amiability on his lips, but contempt in his eye, as he heaved his ponderous body to the ground and with a massy swoop on the starting handle cranked the engine back to life.

"What indeed," said Adam humbly, and, waking up to his work, drove the car forward a few feet to straighten her up, and then with a reasonably well-timed de-clutch and re-engagement in reverse, drove her backward into the street with even clearance on both sides of his wheels.

Mr. Duval grunted moderate approval, and after a quarter of an hour of zig-zag exercise in the neighbouring alleys, bade him steer into Victoria Street for a brisk run round before re-entering the yard. Passing St. Ermins, Adam saw a clear line ahead of him, and opened his engine out to nearly twenty miles an hour.

"Easy, easy," cried Mr. Duval; "you're wasting petrol and breaking regulations too. Ease off there with that foot of yours." As the pace dropped to that of the traffic they were overtaking, and they rolled on into Parliament Square, he volunteered the information: "Damned if that little lady you saw didn't get the old bus up to twenty-five in Whitehall this morning, and near got me into trouble with the police. . . . She's Irish, you know, and they're all like that; they keep gabbling away at you, and all the time they're doing what they shouldn't; though, mind you, it was sharp of her to get the bus up to twenty-five without the accelerator roaring at me."

"What did she gabble about?" Adam asked.

"Ask me another one," Mr. Duval protested. "Does any one ever know what the Irish gabble about? . . . Not, mind you, that they ain't witty and all that; but what's it all about? I ask myself.

At the Garage

Anything that matters? I don't think. . . . But she is a nice little lady, I will say that." He added thoughtfully: "A man might do worse than be the 'usband of a little lady like that," and still more thoughtfully: "From Saturday to Monday."

Adam looked at him out of the corner of his eye, accelerating up the slope past King Charles's statue. "Are you married?" he asked.

"Not 'arf," said Mr. Gander Duval, and as one who deprecates further inquiry: "To your left down Pall Mall, if you please, and through the Park 'ome."

Adam brought the Overland smartly through Pall Mall, in and out of the toy-brick castellations of the St. James's Palace precincts, and by the now leafless Mall and war-dinged Buckingham Palace Road, back to the garage, where Mr. Duval dismissed him with a nod and wink composing together a form of encomium. Before going home to luncheon he climbed the iron staircase, theoretically that he might cleanse himself from the moil of the car, actually that he might see if the nice little lady were still about.

He had given up the hope of seeing her, and was redescending the staircase from the top of the building, when the door of one of the lecture rooms on the first floor opening, twenty minutes later than class usually ended, poured forth a bevy of damsels, foremost among whom was Mr. Duval's charmer. But again, from his position above her head, Adam could not distinguish her features; yet he had no doubt whatever that it was she with her extraordinarily familiar allure. . . . She was Irish, Mr. Duval had said. . . . Could she possibly be Woodbine Blake? But Woodbine Blake was already a skilled driver, or she had not been allowed to tool that ambulance in the streets of London. Besides, this young woman was too free of movement for Miss Blake, who, as he knew her, affected the

In London

calculated and somewhat mincing paces of the theatre.

He was still pondering this question when he reached Norfolk Square, where Miss Durward, all urbanity, was waiting lunch for him, and tactfully bore with his distracted silence. . . . Still pondering it when he returned to the garage at three for the afternoon lecture on the unnatural vices of carburetters. . . . Still pondering it when, an hour later, he passed on into the shops, where his self-chosen task was the disintegration of the cylinders of a sleeve-valved Knight-Daimler. This was a job requiring at least two persons, and he had got into his overalls and was waiting the arrival of the lady who should be appointed him as mate, when a familiar voice penetrated his ears from behind. . . . Some one from Dublin ? . . . Who ? . . . The tone was strident and unattractive, but it roused poignant memories.

Still appearing to stare with professional acumen into the sump of the Knight-Daimler, Adam swivelled his head just enough to catch sight, by a sheep's glance, of a lean face towering some inches above the tallest of a group of pupils, and talking down to a golden head engulfed below. "Well, it's damn mean of you, that's all I can say, and if we're not going to work together you can go to hell for all I care." . . . Adam could not hear the answer of the unseen interlocutrix ; but it was short, for the lean figure quickly spat out : "You can go to hell, I say, you can go to hell ! I'm done with this" —here followed an adjective made fashionable by the war as a term of dispraise—"place. You don't catch me here again." The figure disappeared rending its overall.

In spite of himself, Adam crepitated at the apparition and sighed with relief when it vanished ; for this was no other than Miss Macfie, who not so very long ago, indeed upon that day he left Dublin

At the Garage

as he had intended for ever, had assaulted first his heart and then his head. Even the starkest soul might quake in her presence. Never could Mr. Gander Duval have appraised her as a nice little lady or companionable from Saturday even unto Monday : stouter fellows than stout Mr. Duval would have stolen forth to matins on the Sunday. Never could Adam's eyes have followed her heels or eke her hat with desire. . . . But who, he asked himself, was that other one, hidden in the crowd, with whom she had quarrelled ? . . . Could it be ? . . . His pulses throbbed at the thought.

They throbbed faster as there emerged from the buzz of talk the voice of the instructor : " Mr. Quinn, here's a new mate to work with you on that chassis."

And behold ! all green and gold as he had known her of yore, for her overall was of the familiar shade, and her hair, bobbed once again, retained its brilliancy, stood Barbara Burns : so lithe and blithe and youthful, that he could not think of her as the wife of Mr. Leaper-Carahar, C.B., or of any man. Nor did she seem to wish so to be thought of ; for on her deft hands, bared for work, there was no ring save one simple filament, which Adam knew Mr. Macarthy had given her as a toy from a Christmas tree, long ago, when she was still a child . . . and Adam himself a ragged little boy selling newspapers in Sackville Street, with never a hope of entering her world.

These things huddled confusedly through his mind as their eyes met ; but Barbara faced him with an unflinching glance and a mere nod of recognition. " So you're to be my mate," she opened curtly. " Well, carry on, and let's see what I can learn from you."

But Adam knew from the tone of her voice that he could teach her nothing, and that even the vapours of a sleeve-valved Knight-Daimler were

In London

more comprehensible to her than to him. . . . Always excepting, of course, in theory. She seemed to have even greater physical power as they lifted the cylinder block from its place ; and he cursed the feebleness of his right arm, making him palpably contemptible in her eyes.

As they paused to draw breath after laying the ponderous block on the floor, she said, in a low voice : " Did I hear him call you Quinn ? "

" Yes," Adam returned in the same tone, and braced himself to explain why he had taken the name of her mother's father. But Barbara did not deign to show further interest in the matter. Her next question was about the working of the machine in front of them, and, although he knew the answer, he failed to give it to her until she had forgotten the question. A long silence fell, broken only by inevitable grunts and monosyllables. . . . He felt a wild desire to tell her that Mr. Gander Duval said she gabbled. . . . But it would have been easier to precipitate himself from the iron staircase.

Chapter Thirty

BARBARA

WHEN Barbara did at last condescend to speak, her gambit was a crushing one. "What are you doing in London? Some one told me you'd been killed at the Dardanelles."

Adam meekly pointed out that the Dardanelles expedition had been abandoned before he left Dublin. She went on: "Oh, Salonika then, or Syria or Mespot., or some old place. . . . I suppose I'm thinking of Calvinia's young man; he was killed somewhere there."

Adam faintly smiled. "Calvinia's young man? Miss Macfie's, is it? I didn't know she had a young man."

"He's dead and can't deny it," Barbara snapped crisply. "And are you sure you're not one of her young men yourself?"

To this Adam answered with a blush; but as he was already flushed from struggling with the engine, he hoped his mate might not notice it. Whether she did or did not, the conversation again dropped into desultory exchanges more or less appropriate to the work in hand, until Barbara, abruptly throwing down her spanner, declared that she had had enough for the day.

"Are you going home?" Adam asked, somewhat perturbed, for they were surrounded by particles of Knight-Daimler.

"Not necessarily home," his mate answered, "but I can't stand any more of this beastly engine."

In London

Adam looked at her pitifully. "Don't you find it interesting?" he pleaded.

Barbara shrugged her shoulders. "At first it wasn't bad," she answered; "but I'm fed up now."

"That's a pity," Adam said.

Her eyes fired with challenge. "How do you mean it's a pity?"

Adam despondently said: "Well, now that you have got it all to pieces, the real job is to put it together again."

"I don't see that at all," said Barbara. "Why can't somebody else do that to-morrow?"

"I suppose they could," Adam answered; "but it's the rule that we do it ourselves."

"Blow the rule!" cried Barbara; "I'm fed up, I tell you. If you like to put it together, you may. I'm going home."

"Oh, you are going home," was all that Adam answered, and with an air of martyred innocence proceeded to establish some sort of order among the remains of the Knight-Daimler.

Barbara looked at him, fingering her overall. "Sooner or later I am going home," she said, "and pretty soon you'll have to be going home too." Having allowed the words to work in she added: "Supposing you come now?"

Adam cast a despairing glance at the particles of Knight-Daimler. "All right, . . . if you'll wait for me below," he blurted; and, with a nod, she was gone. . . . His wrist-watch told him it was half-past five. He ought to have worked on till six; then, after a hasty ablution, have hurried to Queen Anne's Gate and past the Government sheds in St. James's Park, up the Duke of York's steps to Waterloo Place and the theatre. There he would take a bath in the new bathroom which the phenomenal profits of *What Rot!* had allowed Mr. Onsin to build (at a cost exceeding the yearly salary of a German Rear Admiral, as his business manager confided to the

gentlemen of the Press, to lend interest to their notices of the five-hundredth performance), snatch a hasty meal of tea and dry bread in his dressing-room, and reach the stage just in time for the curtain to ring up; as it did now, because of the frequent air-raids, at a quarter past seven.

But this Monday night Adam was fated to keep the stage waiting; for, to begin with, after he had huddled the component parts of the Knight-Daimler higgledy-piggledy into the crank case, which he did not attempt to return to the chassis, and rushed upstairs to rid himself of his overalls and such grime as would yield to an instant's plunge of head and hands in boiling water, he flung down the staircase to the yard to await for twenty minutes the reappearance of his mate.

He had almost made up his mind that she had wantonly given him the slip, when at last she appeared, leisurely descending, as though nothing mattered less than her tryst with him. So slow was she that, in the murk of night, he was not sure of her until she came under the glow of the shaded lamp at the bottom. She made no apology for delaying him, said indeed no word, good or bad, until they were out of earshot of any one in the garage, and threading a difficult path through a narrow and atramentous passage into Victoria Street. He wondered if she would never speak, and wondered still more when she did; for she asked: "Why did you call yourself Quinn?"

"Mr. Macarthy suggested it," said Adam, "when I went on the stage."

"Oh! so you're on the stage," said Barbara.

"Yes," said Adam, and added timidly: "Did nobody tell you?"

"I dare say they did," she answered carelessly, "but my life the last year or two has been too terrible for me to be impressed by gossip."

In London

Adam's tenderness was awakened. "Have you really had a bad time?" he asked.

"Terrible," said Barbara, "really terrible. No one will ever know what I suffered."

Adam's voice was full of sensibility as he pleaded to know the worst.

"There's nothing to tell," said Barbara. . . . "Nothing that I could tell you. . . . It would be quite impossible for you to understand what I have suffered."

"You did wrong to marry him," said Adam bitterly.

"He was not my own choice," Barbara seemed to argue; "beggars can't be choosers. . . . I'd have married the Kaiser to get away from my mother."

"Would you really," said Adam sympathetically, "would you really?" It did not occur to him that his then Imperial Majesty would not have jumped at the chance, deeming his crown well lost for the sake of Barbara, even a Barbara with no more love to give him than she had bestowed upon Mr. Leaper-Carahar.

Forgetful of the theatre and all else, he felt his arms going out to fold her to him protectively against bad men like her husband. . . . Not that he had ever thought of Mr. Leaper-Carahar as being her husband in any sense flattering to that official. Mr. Macarthy had propounded the view that it was possible for Barbara to be in love with him; but Adam had consistently rejected the proposition, and here she was now confirming his view. . . . Yet he dared not touch her, lest he too should find himself in the same boat with his elderly rival. . . . Then, incredible joy, she touched him. "I find it impossible to see where I'm going," she cried, with sudden dismay, "you'd better take care of me," and thrust an arm through his.

"If I may," he answered, "if I may." It seemed to him that his heart accelerated like the engine of

246

the Overland when he opened her out for top speed. In her company, pressed side by side in the blackness, with no light anywhere but a blob of reflected search-light like a diffused and nebulous moon overhead, he felt an exhilaration that so far he had known only in dreams. For with Caroline Brady, even in the short hour of consummation, his passion had always been damped by the certainty that her world was not his; but Barbara's flesh and his were grass of one field, clay of one mould. And he felt that in taking his arm she had made acknowledgment of this and their common descent from that incorrigible romantic, Sir David Byron-Quinn.

It really seemed that some such thought must have worked simultaneously in her own mind; for she said a moment later: "I never can think of my mother as David Byron-Quinn's daughter."

"No more do I," Adam agreed, "though of course she has qualities she may have got from him."

"Yes," said Barbara, "she has no end of pluck, and she has good looks; . . . at least she's generally considered good-looking." She paused, as it were, expectantly.

"Jolly good-looking," Adam agreed; "I remember still how lovely I thought her when I saw her first as a boy."

"And that's not so very long ago, is it?" Barbara suggested.

"It seems an awfully long time to me," said Adam; "but then, of course, my life is changed in every way since then."

"So has mine," Barbara declared, with a fresh call to his sympathy, which he showed by a silent pressure of the arm. And to this he was thrilled to imagine that she responded with a pressure on her part. By the time they reached Victoria Street Mr. Leaper-Carahar, C.B., so far as Adam was concerned, was dead, buried and forgotten; and his wife (whether in name only or not) avoided

In London

any word or action that might have weakened this impression.

Between the obfuscation of the Pimlico alleys and the blinding flashes of his relighted passion for Barbara, Adam hardly knew where he was when they suddenly struck the main thoroughfare at a point other than that he would have reached had he been alone. His companion was quicker than he: "We're close to the Brighton and South Coast station," she said; "let's go into the tea room and see what we can get to eat. It will be warmer and easier to talk there than in the street."

Adam looked round still hazily. "How do you know where we are?"

She pointed to the clock that stood as terminus at the railhead in Middlesex of the Surrey side trams. "There's Vauxhall Bridge Road."

The thread of Adam's ideas snapped; for he saw that it was nearly seven. Pulling up short, he ejaculated: "I must go, . . . the theatre, . . . you understand."

"Oh, bother the theatre!" she cried, "just when I wanted to talk to you. . . . What theatre is it? . . . Where? . . ." Her voice and whole manner were contemptuous. But when he said it was the Grand, he suspected that she was impressed, though she affected not to be. She vouchsafed to say: "Well, that's not far. What time must you be there?"

"I should have been there half an hour ago," he answered; "I'm due to speak my first line in twenty minutes."

Barbara woke up, and with an imperious wave of her hand stopped an empty taxi making for the station. "Jump in," she said, "and I'll drop you." As Adam obeyed, she called to the driver: "Grand Theatre, stage door, like billyoh!"

"Right, lady," grinned the man, and, whisking

about into Buckingham Palace Road, stimulated his Napier to illustrate his conception of the term "billyoh." In a moment they were skurrying through St. James's Park at twice the pace Adam had been pleased to attain in the Overland that afternoon.

As the driver crowned his achievement by dodging through one of the bottle-necks into St. James's Square, by fifteen seconds the shortest way to the Grand stage door, Adam thrust his fingers in his waistcoat pocket to grasp half a crown ; but Barbara showed him that very coin already between finger and thumb, and said : " This is my taxi, I took it." And so great was her ascendancy over him that he ingloriously fled into the theatre, leaving her to have her way. He was in his dressing-room before he realised that he had not even said good-bye to her ; but a glimpse of his dirty face in the glass, and the call-boy's warning of but ten minutes to go, dismissed the thought even of Barbara from his mind.

As it was, he was severely rated by the stage-manager for holding down the curtain five precious minutes ; and, injudiciously retorting that Miss Bellingham often kept it down ten, was warned that he was in danger of forgetting which side his bread was buttered. This so enraged him, that his mind was occupied for the rest of the evening in deliberating whether it would or would not be judicious of him to lay his cane across the stage-manager's back ; he was confident of his ability to do this, if in doubt as to the sequel.

Action was yet in abeyance when, as he was leaving the theatre, the no longer haughty door-keeper proffered him knowingly a lady's visiting card. " For you, sir, I think."

Adam read on it in copperplate the words : " Miss Barbara Burns, Abbey Theatre," and in writing : " Have been in front ; see you to-morrow.

In London

Tell Mr. Onsin I thought him simply splendid. B."

As Adam stood looking at this, half pleased and half annoyed, he was conscious of the doorkeeper whispering at him with malty breath behind an oniony hand: "If you take my tip, sir, you'll pin that up prominent in your dressing-room."

Chapter Thirty-One

DEUTSCHLAND UEBER MISS DURWARD

MIDNIGHT following Adam's rediscovery of Barbara saw him slipping between the sheets at Norfolk Square, hating and loving her. Surely there was no one in the world so beautiful as she : so poised ; so proud ; so insolently silly. For Adam was not so modest that he could regard her praise of Mr. Onsin's performance and indifference to his own otherwise than as a premeditated snub. That message was meant to say : " You may think you matter, but you don't. You may suppose that I am interested in you, but I am not." . . . On the other hand, if she merely wanted to snub him, why trouble to leave a card upon him at all ? He was still too ignorant of life, too ingenuous in intrigue, to see what to Miss Macfie would have been the obvious meaning of the matter. He saw only that Barbara was hard of heart, and as he tossed from side to side in bed he imagined himself alternatively melting or breaking it : his temperament was for melting it, but his mood for breaking. Then his mind wandered to the letter he ought to have written Major Macfadden Smith about his chambers in the Temple. He certainly would take them if he could, if only that he might have some quiet place where he could talk to Barbara without interruption. His practical side was trying to calculate how much it would be worth his while to pay for the privilege of uninterrupted conversation with Barbara, when he fell asleep and to dream that Barbara and he were in the centre plot of Norfolk Square (or was it

In London

Mountjoy Square ?) and all the airmen of Germany dropping bombs around them. They dropped them so close that Adam woke with a start, thinking himself hit, to find that an air-raid actually was in progress, and that presumably a bomb had caused the house so to vibrate that one of Mr. Bouchier-Bellingham's illustrations of French manners had leaped off the wall on to his nose. . . . In an instant he was out of bed and on his knees (for the first time in that room) praying that, whatever happened, Barbara might be safe. And so he remained spiritually on guard until the firing died away, and he crept back into bed very cold.

He woke with a sneeze, and discovered the too knowing Tomasso standing over him with the French picture between his fingers and a delighted grin upon his countenance. Adam snatched it from his hand, and Tomasso's military instinct warning him in the very nick of his danger, he fled. The picture crashed on the door as he closed it behind him.

Then Adam sneezed again, and after his bath he coughed. His nose was red, and he held his handkerchief to it during a great part of breakfast. His hostess ventured to suggest that he had a cold, and hinted that he must have caught it on Sunday night or in the small hours of Monday morning. But Adam answered not ; for he had found on his plate the first letter he ever received from the zone of the armies. The address was : A.P.O.S.8, B.E.F., and the signature : Alaric Macfadden Smith, Major.

It ran : "DEAR QUINN,—If you have not forgotten me and a certain little dinner we enjoyed together not so long ago, perhaps you may remember I spoke to you of certain chambers (more or less my own), which I offered you the use of for some time to come, until the military situation becomes more favourable, at your own figure, and which I think I am right in saying I gave you the outer door key

Deutschland ueber Miss Durward

of. Perhaps if you have time you would go and see them and write and tell me if they are of any use to you, and if you happen to find by any chance (I don't say there is) a letter there addressed to me, particularly if in a lady's handwriting, you might be so good as to send it on in a fresh envelope. But it isn't of any consequence if you're at all busy, as I'm sure you must be with so many matinees. You understand, don't you, that I shall be delighted for you to have the rooms at your own terms, for sentimental reasons, as I need not repeat. I may say, should you have any doubt, that the lady whose letter, or perhaps letters, I am asking you to send on, should there be any, is not the lady whose name I mentioned in connection with a certain room containing a bath. I hope you will find the geyser in working order. If there is anything unsatisfactory, have it made good at my expense and deduct from rent, if any. I hope to see you again, but am glad you are not here. Shall be pleased at any time to give you any sort of certificate that you care to have. It would be a real pleasure to my brother's friend. The men are simply splendid, though fed up, as is yours. . . ."

As Adam read, he felt for a moment that the gods were on his side ; but there was a postscript which dashed his cheerfulness : " I ought to warn you that the chambers are considered dangerous in air-raids, being so near the river and high up, as well as combustible and impossible to escape from. You might perhaps use them in the daytime, sleeping at night in some safe place like Leighton Buzzard. I could arrange for you to do this with a patient of mine, if desired. She would be glad of a youthful companion (P.G. or otherwise), but perhaps you might find her too religious. I mention this in confidence."

Adam might have been amused at the notion of fleeing from the bomb-throwers into what he

In London

supposed to be the wilds of Buckinghamshire ; but suddenly he saw himself prostrate on the floor of his bedroom, praying for the body of Barbara as once he had prayed for the soul of Caroline Brady. He read in Miss Durward's affably matter-of-fact eyes that not in a hundred years would she guess how he had caught cold : " Do you know where that bomb dropped last night ? " he asked.

Miss Durward shuddered, and shook her head : " Don't talk of it," she protested ; " they'll get us one of these days when we're least expecting it. Don't let us think of it. No, not even talk about it ; I shouldn't." After a pause, indicating that she considered the subject as closed, she went on : " There were three glasses cracked in the kitchen this morning, and Tomasso says there must have been more than one bomb. Fortunately I was asleep, and didn't wake up until that wretched boy scout, young Higginbotham, startled me blowing the ' All-clear ' very loud on purpose, because I wouldn't register with his mother for cheese." . . . Thus, loosely as was her wont after air-raid nights, Miss Durward went on. But Adam was not listening, until he heard suddenly her threat, if the air-raids continued, to show her dissatisfaction with those responsible for the defence of the Metropolis, by shaking its dust from her shoes and going to live at Bath. . . . " So it might be as well," she concluded, " if you were to look about for other rooms, in case I have to go."

" That," said Adam, " is a good idea. I'll do it now." And, somewhat to her annoyance, he sat down then and there at her desk and wrote Major Macfadden Smith that he would like to take the rooms in Plowden Buildings for at least five weeks, and suggested a rental of two pounds a week.

He felt a glow of satisfaction as he posted this letter, covering the two he had found at Plowden Buildings, in the District Head Office in Spring

Deutschland ueber Miss Durward

Street, deeming it too important a packet for one of those ordinary receptacles which had been pressed to the doubtful uses of the Self-Help and other Ministries. But he remained uneasy as to what might have befallen Barbara in the night. The morning papers had gone to press too early to have any mention of the raid ; and vague scraps of conversation, caught in the street and on the bus to Victoria, told him nothing except that there had been heavy damage as near as Maida Vale. This might account for Miss Durward's cracked glasses ; but he had no reason to suppose that Barbara lived in that neighbourhood. . . . Where did she live? He had no idea ; nor had he told her where he lived. . . . What had they talked about in those precious moments between turning their backs on the garage and parting at the stage door of the Grand? He could not recall anything except that Barbara seemed very sorry for herself. . . .

Mr. Macarthy disapproved of people being sorry for themselves. Adam had a suspicion that, since Barbara married Mr. Leaper-Carahar, his guardian had ceased to approve of her. But then Mr. Macarthy perhaps did not know what he knew from his grandmother : that her marriage was what the French call a white marriage, or marriage that only seemed to be a marriage, and was the opposite of a marriage in the sight of God, which did not seem to be a marriage at all, though it produced somewhat similar results. He himself, as he reflected in Park Lane, was the result of a union which he had not heard called a marriage in the sight of God, though presumably if all things were visible to Him, He must have been a witness to it . . . an unwilling witness? Adam did not quite perceive how Mr. Byron O'Toole, even with the castle behind him, could have forced his will upon the Almighty. So he came to the conclusion, as he walked in at the garage gate, that perhaps at the

In London

moment when Byron O'Toole begot him on the body of Bride Macfadden, née Smith, the two were married in the sight of God. . . . As individuals he could feel no affection nor respect for either of them ; but, for bringing him into this world, despite all its abominations so beautiful and interesting, he thanked them. He flattered himself that he bore no resemblance to either, though in moments of depression he suspected that he was much like what Mr. O'Toole might have been had Lady Daphne Page not presented him in infancy to her charwoman. He had already seen enough of the upper classes to surmise that Mr. Macarthy's opinion that only the lack of schooling and money in his pocket prevented Mr. O'Toole cutting a brilliant figure in Irish society, and one of some distinction even in England, was not pure sarcasm. . . .

The voice of the flapper clerk in the sentry-box at the gateway of the garage broke in upon his thoughts with the words : " Oh, Mr. Quinn, can Mr. Duval see you about altering the time of your drive ? "

Adam frowned. " Where is Mr. Duval ? " he asked.

" Just across the yard talking to that lady," said the flapper clerk, and Adam's eyes, following her finger, beheld first Barbara and then Mr. Gander Duval engaged in what to Adam's scandalised emotions appeared to be something uncommonly like a flirtation.

Chapter Thirty-Two

MR. DUVAL ADVISES

ADAM stepped forward towards Mr. Duval as if he were about to transfix with his walking-stick, in the manner laid down in the bayonet exercise, that gentleman's well-covered peritoneum. "You wish to speak with me?" he demanded.

The chauffeur, completing at his ease a laugh of considerable size, answered off-hand: "Not at all, sir, not at all; pray don't mention it."

"Then why . . ." began Adam angrily, to be checked by a wave from Mr. Duval's enormous paw, indicating Barbara.

Turning upon her, she met his indignant eye with a smile almost as sphinx-like as Mr. Macarthy's, and his wrath was abashed to hear her say: "I'm so sorry, but I thought it might be more convenient for every one if we could arrange with Mr. Duval to take our driving lessons together. Mr. Duval tells me he has no objection," and smilingly she looked to him for confirmation.

Mr. Duval did not smile. He said: "No object. whatever," crisply, as though he were well aware of the number of fishes in the sea.

"Have you any objection?" Barbara asked Adam, with mock humility, and he was too overjoyed at the idea to resent the sarcasm of her tone. So it was agreed, although it involved ringing up Miss Durward to apologise for his not returning to luncheon, that Mr. Duval should take both his young pupils out together. "It will save petrol," Barbara observed, as if she could have no other motive, and to emphasise this she turned away

In London

from Adam with an air of indifference, apparently not hearing his inquiry as to how she had been affected by the air-raïd.

As she attended none of the classes which he attended, they did not meet again until it was time for them to take their places in the Overland. Mr. Duval placed Barbara at the wheel and sat down beside her, while he waved Adam to a seat behind them. All through that morning's lectures Adam had been enjoying in anticipation this hour with Barbara, and he had gone without luncheon lest he should be a moment late for it. But it opened dully, for Mr. Duval laconically bade her drive to a blind alley off Caxton Street, and her whole lesson was spent crawling up that alley backwards, and down it again to crawl up it once more. At the first effort she did this pretty well, until it came to the turn at the top, when she bumped her near driving wheel on a neglected curb stone; her second attempt was not so good, and her third was only better than her fourth and fifth. The sixth effort went aground within a few feet, and instead of putting her lever into first gear to get afloat again, she deliberately accelerated her engine and tore past the obstacle, leaving many inches of fractured wing behind. Whereupon Mr. Gander Duval remarked with Mephistophelean politeness that he knew a perfect little lady who had had just about enough of it for to-day; and restarting the engine, which had stopped to listen to what he had to say, he invited his fair pupil to relinquish her place in favour of her young friend.

Barbara leaped out with an offended air, and was apparently of a mind to make for home without a word to Adam, when Mr. Duval again interposed. "Better jump in behind, and let's drop you where you want to go."

"I don't want to go anywhere," Barbara retorted, eyeing him reproachfully.

Mr. Duval Advises

"Looks bad for a lady to go nowhere in a 'uff," said Mr. Duval firmly; "better jump in while there is yet time," and he gave the door just a ghost of a swing as though to indicate the possibility of its being closed against Barbara for evermore. . . .

And to Adam's surprise the proud Barbara meekly obeyed, though he himself was on the very point of finding words wherewith to rebuke Mr. Duval, a mere English or even hybrid chauffeur, for his impertinence to an Irish gentlewoman to whom Adam, if but doubtfully of kin, desired to be more than kind. . . . But he had no time to think of this; for it behoved him to take the Overland out of that backwater alley into the full tide of Victoria Street and Buckingham Palace Road.

"I want you to show the lady what you can do," Mr. Duval exhorted him, "and I don't mind wasting a bit of petrol for once by way of swank, just to show you can do it. Go a'-ead!"

Adam, on his mettle, wangled the car with some dexterity, as he flattered himself, through the cross-tides into Victoria Street, past the station and with something like a rip round into Buckingham Palace Road, going west with the speedometer kicking at twenty-five. He was approaching the Chelsea end somewhat proud of himself, when Mr. Duval motioned him to ease down. "Slow down," he said, "slow down, low as you can go without coming off top gear; but keep your toe ready on the accelerator, or you'll get your engine stopped. Now very steady into Ebury Street and bring her up to ten, and then listen to me." He threw his chin over his shoulder: "And you listen too, young lady, for your faults are the same as 'is, only more so."

Adam, oddly relieved to find that he was not to be made a butt for Barbara's amusement, soberly obeyed, and in Ebury Street Mr. Duval continued his discourse. "Now like most young neophytes, as they call them, Mr.—I forget your name—you've a

In London

trick of taking corners with your engine in full buzz, and then when you're round it, safe by the dispensation of Providence, getting scared and slowing down. Now once for all remember this, when you want to negotiate a corner and you've any speed on, you toot your horn and you de-clutch. When you're round it you accelerate and get back into gear as smartly as you can, remembering that if you lose time, and don't accelerate enough, you stop your engine sure as eggs. On the other hand, if you take your corner at any speed with your engine in gear, and the road has any camber to speak of, or there's a little grease about, as likely as not ye'll be standing on your head in the kingdom of 'eaven when you're least expecting it." Again his chin swung round to the back seat. "The remark about standing on your 'ead does not apply to ladies," he explained; "but even the most perfect little lady will find herself in Kingdom Come the wrong way up, if she goes on taking corners in the wrong way."

He turned to Adam again: "Now we'll take some corners, if you please." And forthwith he set Adam waltzing the Overland round the blocks of Belgravia, and cutting figures of eight through Chelsea until it was time to turn homewards. Adam lost all sense of where he was, even on the return journey; for his mentor allowed him no more straight running than was sufficient to get the speedometer within nodding distance of twenty before he directed him to left or right, keeping all the while a running fire of general conversation with Barbara, interlarded without change of tone with words of command and advice to Adam.

Thus ran on Mr. Gander Duval's monologue, as Adam, all asweat to acquit himself featly in Barbara's eyes, wriggled the Overland in and out and round about thoroughfares alternately mean and pretentious: "Yes, miss, it is a strain on a young lady

260

Mr. Duval Advises

that isn't used to go pushing a bus rumtifoosle, as you might call it, up and down those blinking lanes; but that's where the real work of a chauffeur comes in, not in spinning along the Ripley Road with his mouth open for a champagne lunch. Left, if you please. De-clutch . . . Accelerate, accelerate! . . . And the Overland engine, when it isn't worn out, which isn't always, is easy as winking backwards or forwards; but to reverse a car that wants handling, like a Wolseley or a Fiat, up a corkscrew turn like R.A.C. test at St. James's. . . . Right, if you please. . . . Out of gear. . . . Don't let your revolutions drop. . . . Clutch again. . . . Accelerate, accelerate! is another pair of shoes. Not that there's anything in it to make a song about. . . . No, I wouldn't drive for the M.T. for any money. All slop gears. Ruins the hands. I'd rather go into the trenches, if I had to go at all; but, thank God, I've got heart disease. Left again. Remember what I said. Out you go. . . . Keep her running. In again. Accelerate, accelerate!" The corner of Adam's left eye caught Mr. Duval's paw indexing some object in a strait street of tall houses, to him a mere course for gathering speed, "That's what I call 'orrid. The man that lives in that 'ouse, and is a nobleman, and ought to know better, goes and advertises his own business outside his own 'ouse."

At this point Adam was conscious that Barbara's interest was at last fully roused by Mr. Duval's conversation; for Mr. Duval went on with confidence: "You wonder 'ow I mean he advertises his business. Well, if Mr. What's-his-name will just take us round again I'll show ye. Left. . . . De-clutch, round you go. There you are. Got him again. Accelerate, accelerate! Left again into the square and left again up Belgrave Place. We'll just do that little bit again." The reference to the square and Belgrave Place prepared Adam for what was to follow: "Yes, miss, on that pillar box we

In London

passed you may have read these words : "'Uns go 'Ungry for the sake of 'Ome. Britons arise and show you can go 'ungrier still.' . . . Now I'm told that the nobleman who lives in that 'ouse gets ten thousand a year for inventing bilge like that and sticking it round the town. . . . I don't believe it, but I haven't a doubt he gets more for doing it than it's worth. For it's worth nothing at all. It's enough to make you want to 'oist the Red Flag to read an advert. like that in Eaton Place. But it's an interesting street otherwise. An Irish rebel with the queer name of Arson lives at No. 5, and got a bomb in his area not long ago. And an interesting thing happened in the nobleman's 'ouse too. You see that middle window on the first floor—I'm told the police pushed a foreign countess through it not long ago, trying to handcuff her I suppose they were, and she fell on the very letter box and was killed, so they made out she shot herself by accident. Rum story, but everything doesn't get into the papers. Left again. . . . Out. . . . In. . . . Straight ahead. . . . 'Ome. Accelerate, accelerate!"

As Barbara prepared to descend from the car in the yard she said with condescension : " Perhaps, Mr. Duval, it might interest you to know that the foreign countess, as you call her, who was killed in Eaton Place, was at one time in love with my grandfather."

" Was that so, miss ? " Mr. Duval readily responded ; " then if your grandmother was at all like you, I guess there were wigs on the green."

Barbara smiled scornfully. " Oh, I'm not jealous," she said, in a voice of ladylike rebuke, " and I don't suppose my grandmother was either."

" I suppose she wasn't," Mr. Duval agreed, " if she never heard anything about it."

These words were scarce spoken when Adam, feeling that he had been too long excluded from the conversation, inquired in his turn of Mr. Duval :

Mr. Duval Advises

"I wonder if it would interest you to know that the lady whom you call a countess, but was in reality of superior rank, in fact a marchioness . . ." At this point he had the misfortune to draw breath and allow Mr. Duval to interject the qualification: "Foreign."

"Besides being a marchioness, foreign or otherwise," Adam insisted with dignity, "she was before marriage an earl's daughter, and it may interest you to know, my grandmother."

"Before marriage," Mr. Duval repeated, with an air of politeness. He seemed puzzled, but not impressed. . . . Then one of his large paws descended on Adam's shoulder, and the other, to Adam's consternation, on Barbara's. And he actually stood there, without being blasted, while, there being no one within earshot, he said confidentially though not without breadth of effect: "I see what you two are after: You want to spoof me that you're cousins. . . . Why trouble? You can do what you like for all I care. It's all one to me if you were twins." And giving them a jocose salute he got into the car again and, winking at Adam, said for the last time that day: "Accelerate, accelerate!"

Chapter Thirty-Three

ADAM ACCELERATES

BARBARA turned from Adam and ascended the garage stairway without a word. He followed her, the expression of her back convicting him of crime in daring to claim kinship with her through her grandfather's mistress. He wanted to run after her and point out that he had not done so ; that it was Mr. Gander Duval who jactitated a marriage of the blackest shade between Sir David and the Marchesa. . . . She disappeared into the seraglio, ignoring him, and he dreaded that he might see her no more that day.

Through the afternoon's lecture he could visualise only her portrait upon the blackboard : every diagram twisted itself into some suggestion of her face or form ; every formula spelt in cipher her name ; the very words issuing from the mouth of the lecturer referred esoterically to her. And through everything echoed the accents of Mr. Gander Duval chanting : " Accelerate, accelerate !

Wistfully as when a schoolboy at Belvedere, Adam pined for the class to end that he might flee to the workshops and learn his fate. He would look out of the window and long for her ; he would stare up at the ceiling and long for her ; he would gaze in the lecturer's face and long for her. . . . Just as, not so many months ago, at Belvedere he had affected interest in this or that when really interested only in Josephine O'Meagher. At the garage Josephine O'Meagher had ceased to exist. She could not have breathed in that atmosphere any more than St.

Francis of Assisi could have driven a tank over the body of Brother Wolf. On the other hand, Caroline Brady with a few shillings' worth more of education, and just the ghost of a chance, might have done well in that glib company. But Caroline Brady was a ghost herself, and all that Adam had felt for her was definitely passed to Barbara.

It is easy for the living to triumph over the dead, and all the easier when there is no contrast of character other than arises from circumstances. Even Adam was observant enough to see that Barbara had Caroline's qualities, enriched by a greater generosity of inheritance and environment ; he did not tell himself that she had Caroline's defects, refined by traditions and education. He saw only (while he pretended to see the principle governing the adjustment of a Bosch magneto) that Barbara's was of all the earth's bodies the most desirable, and that her mentality, in the aspect shown to him, enhanced the provocation of her physical charm. He would not have called her, as he had called Josephine, beautiful and good ; she was that more alluring thing to young knighthood—lovely and ruthless : *belle et sans merci*.

He was not sure that Barbara could love at all ; but he dreamt of a power in himself to win what love she had. If she had loved any one else, she could not have married Leaper-Carahar. . . . And now he knew for sure that she had never pretended to love him. All argumentative roads led Adam to the conclusion that she was to be won by him ! only there remained the stubborn fact that she despised or affected to despise him. And why ? . . . Because in Dublin he was whispered by scandal to be no gentleman. But in the greater world of London fame acclaimed him a gentleman without question. And in his own bones he felt himself a gentleman : the sordid and the blackguardedly had no secret hold on him ; his thrifty soul stopped short of

In London

meanness. For a youngster of artistic temperament he was almost a Puritan: even his most sensual mood withered at the adumbration of vice. At Ravenna he might have been as forward as Dante, but at Venice more shy than Rousseau, that bashfullest of all men that ever got a child. In fine, unworthy as he admitted himself to be of the gorgeous Barbara Burns, this lady Venus in a golden shawl, as the Playboy would have called her, he asked himself as a practical young fellow, who was more worthy than he? Especially now when all the youth of Britain were flinging their valorous beauty beneath the wheels of Juggernaut.

And although nineteen, as he would be next April, was young for a man to marry and settle down, he flattered himself that few men ten years his senior were so well circumstanced in fortune as he. In Dublin a man of thirty earning an income of seven hundred a year would be considered a catch. . . . He forgot that long ere he was thirty, one of the reasons contributing most solidly to his income would have disappeared; unless, indeed, the war were still going on and he taking no share in it. Rather did he reflect that Leaper-Carahar, three times his age, was making only one and a half times his income; so at Leaper-Carahar's age, he reckoned he should be making nearly twice what that gentleman made now and had enabled him to buy the priceless Barbara in the Dublin slave-market. He was admitting to himself the point that Barbara as a slave would be written off by the Orientalist as a wash-out, when the class ended and he was set free to put his valour to the test.

That Mr. Leaper-Carahar had any moral lien upon Barbara did not present itself to him. For him she was not Mr. Leaper-Carahar's wife, not a married woman at all, but merely a slave, iniquitously enslaved, and momentarily escaped and basking in the sunlight of freedom. It seemed to

266

Adam Accelerates

Adam that if he took courage to face her pursuer he could free her for aye. And Adam never doubted his courage to face Mr. Leaper-Carahar—his grandmother could not have done so more readily than he—but he was less certain of his ability to face Barbara.

What bravery he had in relation to Barbara oozed out of him as he climbed to the top of the house and donned his overalls. Momentarily, however, he was enheartened by re-reading Major Macfadden Smith's letter, which happened to drop from his pocket as he changed; and, reflecting that he had now or was about to have a spot of earth he could call his own, he imagined how delightful it would be if Barbara condescended to be interested in his address, to tell her he had chambers in the Temple. He went so far as to imagine the possibility of her wanting to see them. He would invite her to drink afternoon tea with him, bringing, of course, any one she liked as chaperon . . . oh hell! Miss Macfie?

He went downstairs half laughing at his own horror over the thought of a visit from this bereaved lady, and was thrilled to find Barbara petulantly fiddling with the mortal remains of the Knight-Daimler.

"I thought you'd never come!" she greeted him with peevish coquetry. "What on earth are you smiling at?"

"Can't you guess?" said Adam, boldly challenging her eyes.

She dropped them and pouted. "I don't see anything to smile at."

"But I do," and Adam was most emphatic.

He was so emphatic that she could not avoid to question: "What do you see?"

He paused to answer until at long last her eyes turned to him inquiringly, not to escape from his until he had said: "I see my mate waiting for me."

She turned instantly with a frown, but her cheeks, he was sure, were pinker. "You don't know what you're talking about," she said crushingly, but

In London

weakened the effect by adding: "And anyhow, that's a crib from Stephen Macarthy."

She weakened the effect so far as her dignity was concerned; but the incomprehensible phrase served to baffle Adam for the time being, and their further conversation became mechanical.

Yet, although their talk might be of inlet and exhaust, of cams and piston rings and washers and big ends, touching nothing nearer the loves of mortals than the sexual differentiation of screws, it seemed that she, no more than himself, was wholly concentrated upon anatomising the Knight-Daimler.

"Calvinia," she mentioned without premeditation, as it seemed to Adam, "Calvinia makes out that even screws are male and female. Is that true? . . . I thought it was just her queer mind, until I caught something about a female screw in Mr. Baker's lecture this morning."

Adam met her glance with innocent eyes. "They are called male and female in the trade," he answered, and, picking out a couple from the lumber box beside him, he passed them to her and went on with his work.

Presently he heard them chink one after the other into the box, as she tossed them back across the chassis. And there was an unwonted graciousness in her voice as she said: "You really are rather a sweet person."

After that, conversation between them ceased until she said: "I must be off. . . . Can I help you to put things in order first?"

He gazed at her surprisedly, because of this unlooked for condescension, and she seemed to give way before him as she murmured: "Don't look at me with Stephen Macarthy's eyes."

He stood a moment, rapt in the recollection that Caroline Brady too had in a sense complained of the likeness of his eyes to his guardian's.

From her subtle face his eyes travelled to the

Adam Accelerates

broad face of the clock at the farther end of the workshop: it agreed with his wrist-watch upon five and twenty minutes to six. Barbara made a movement of perhaps mock impatience: "You don't want my help."

"No," Adam answered at his leisure; "but I want your company. Sit down." With acted ease he drew a bench from the wall.

But Barbara disdained the suggested motion. "If I stay I may as well help," she said.

"No," Adam answered her again. "As soon as I've got the parts straight you might help me to lift the thing back into its place, but you'll only waste time muddling me over bolts and nuts."

"I don't muddle," Barbara retorted.

"You muddle me," he insisted, with an urbane smile that disarmed her resentment.

She sank down on the bench murmuring: "You simply are Stephen to-night."

"I wish I were," he answered only.

Five minutes passed before she surrendered to her desire to ask him why he wished it.

"Because you would find my company more enjoyable," he said; and it seemed to him as well as to her that it was a man speaking.

Apart from indifferent things, she said no more until they bade each other farewell in Victoria Street, where she watched for a bus going Chelseawards. She had given him an address at Joy Mansions, King's Road, which she described as a studio.

"A studio?" Adam cried. "Have you taken up painting?" That seemed to him an explanation of her being in London.

"I've painted all my life," she answered; "only I'm less vain than some people about showing my work."

"I'm sure," Adam protested, "it's awfully good."

Barbara laughed bitterly: "Now you're not talking like Mr. Macarthy," and cut short his answer with the words: "Good-night, I see my

In London

bus;" she nodded towards a red monster emerging from the slime of a wet London night.

Adam hugged her arm as he led her through the posse of humanity struggling for an inside place. Barbara said the outside would do for her.

"You'll catch cold," he protested, "and there's a lot of 'flu about."

"Does that matter?" she rejoined; "you forget that I'm married . . . miserably married."

In point of fact he had forgotten it, and it was a sickening shock to be reminded of it thus. So he let her part from him without a word, and as the red monster (which he was not in a state to recognise as the same No. Eleven which had carried him to Fleet Street within forty-eight hours past) sank with her into the mire, figured the Shepherd's Bush omnibus as a geni of Mr. Leaper-Carahar's ring. Then he conjured up the vision of Barbara's hand with no such ring upon it, and his heart glowed again. A fig for such a marriage as that! A fig for anything that strove to part Barbara from him, if only he could win her love. . . .

If only he could win her love. . . . Was he winning it? At the corner of Vauxhall Bridge Road he looked questioningly at the clock marking the terminus of the tram line. But it only told him that it was half-past six, and that he must not keep the stage waiting.

If Adam had learnt nothing else at the Grand Theatre under Mr. Onsin's tutelage, he had learned that, whatever engagements one might break or pledges falsify, one must not keep the stage waiting, unless one happened to be a star actor or the mistress of a famous, if frustrate, commander. And even then, what one gained in advertisement one lost in popularity with one's humbler brethren. . . . With an odd feeling of exhilaration he felt in his pocket for half a crown and, doing that which he did not do once in a blue moon, called a taxi and drove to the theatre.

Chapter Thirty-Four

OUT OF GEAR

ALTHOUGH upon that wet and murky night Adam was the first of the principals to reach the stage, where he awaited some extra minutes his cue (so that the stage-manager boasted to the prompter that he had given one whom he characterised as an amateur, qualified by an adjective more appropriate to the military than the theatrical profession, a lesson), this was in fact the first occasion upon which he believed that he could play Lord Algy Taplow better than Mr. Onsin or Mr. Sackville or both together. Not that he desired to play it. Dear no! Romeo for him . . . and Hamlet . . . and Othello? Othello? . . . A beastly part, but full of fat. . . . Yes, when he had a theatre of his own he might condescend to play Othello. . . . But Romeo for preference. . . . Also, why not the Playboy? He would make the Playboy a purely romantic figure, not the dirty little skunk which some argued was the correct reading of the part.

He went to bed that night with everything handsome about him, or so it seemed as he was falling asleep . . . He was a successful actor, and he was about to be a successful lover, and as it were in the stride of his success he had got very delightful chambers in the Temple at a most reasonable figure. It was true that they would be very dangerous during air-raids, but Barbara would not mind that any more than he; and what did it matter if a bomb hit them, provided that it hit them both together. He felt that if Barbara gave herself to him at all, bombs would not deter her.

In London

It was disappointing the next day, when he put on his best suit to go motoring with Barbara in Mr. Duval's Overland, to find no Barbara at the garage. Mr. Duval gave her ten minutes' grace and then, despite Adam's protest, refused further 'o wait, and made him take his lesson alone. Disgruntled as he was, Adam swallowed his agitation and concentrated on the work, so that his instructor was fain to admit that yesterday's lesson had not been thrown away. "If you were like this every day," said Mr. Duval, "you'd soon learn to drive."

Adam was so bucked by this that he kept his spirits up until the afternoon and the hour came for Barbara to join him beside the corpse of the Knight-Daimler, but there was no Barbara.

Five o'clock came and went. Still no Barbara, and he knew there was no hope of her now. The foul weather that had set in the previous afternoon still prevailed, though during the hour of his driving lesson he had no worse to contend with than greasy surfaces. . . . Until that evening he knew not what a dreary place an engineering workshop could be, nor what infinite melancholy could compress itself within a cylinder and slowly percolate through the pores of its metal walls.

That was the gloomiest spring living England could remember. On the Western Front she and her allies were being wedged asunder and flung back mangled towards the southern rivers and the western sea: losing in a day what they had won in years. Their piebald armies hailed from the four quarters of the globe were welded together only to be powdered beneath the hammer of single-minded Thor, starved not yet into defeat, but an ever more frantic frenzy of valorous despair.

But the last fury of Prussia's death throes hardly so much as flicked Adam's consciousness. He read no more than the headlines of happenings on the Western Front or any seat of war. He knew only

that despite the intricate permutation of search-lights quartering the sky, the German airmen night after night flung death and destruction into London's heart, so that many thought it must ere long stop beating. And Paris, as he heard at the theatre, was already bombarded by the Huns' artillery safely emplaced behind their battle line. . . . What of that? What did London and Paris matter compared with his solicitude for Barbara? No more than the cities beneath the Dead Sea. . . . But what if Barbara had caught cold last night on that accursed bus? . . . What if, like Caroline Brady, she suddenly sickened and died?

Half-past five. . . . He flung down his spanner, and leaving the Knight-Daimler in worse case than ever, hurriedly washed and walked across St. James's Park in pelting rain to the theatre. . . . How miserable it was in the Park to-night! How exhilarating two nights ago! . . . What a miracle of verve was Barbara. . . . What could have become of her? . . . A horrible thought clutched his throat as he climbed the Duke of York's steps. Could she have slain herself? . . . He faltered through a nightmare the last few yards to the theatre.

"For you, sir?" asked Cerberus, presenting a telegram addressed: "Adam Quinn Macfadden, Esquire, Grand Theatre, S.W." The message ran: "So sorry, influenza, writing. Burns." Not until he noticed that it had been handed in at the Chelsea Head Office did he realise that it was from Barbara. "Thanks," he said, in a choking voice, to Cerberus, and passed on feverishly to his dressing-room.

Again and again he sighed with relief that evening. And he played his part no worse than he had done it of late. But he was weary of it, weary of this nonsensical play in which the egregious Onsin appeared to greater advantage than himself. Why had he not waited for his guardian to find him an

In London

opening with Galsworthy, or Masfield, or Shaw? . . . They wrote plays in which an actor of his genius need not be ashamed to appear; it did not occur to him that their producers might hesitate about paying him seven hundred a year for his services, their receipts for a year being perhaps no more than those for a few weeks of *What Rot!* He was flatly ignorant of theatrical economics. To him success was success, and failure failure; he had yet to learn that a distinguished dramatist might account a piece a success from which he had made a hundred pounds, while a nonentity might deplore as a failure some prodigy of his art which had brought him in a thousand.

From the theatre he hastened home, and was thrilled to find Barbara's letter already come. Miss Durward handed it to him with a sniff. . . . A neat-looking letter with an agreeable savour. . . . He guessed she had been sniffing at it all the evening, and wished he had the self-control to get it to his bedroom before opening it. But his fingers had done this while his will was thinking about it, and even with Miss Durward's eyes upon him he read:—

"You will miss me, perhaps, a little to-day, dear Adam, when you take your driving lesson, and I dare say that I too may miss you and Mr. Duval when the hour comes for it. But I cannot possibly go to the garage to-day, as the doctor forbids it. That is to say, of course, I could come to the garage, but I couldn't do myself or any one else much good if I got there. It seems that I must have caught cold last night, and the influenza you spoke of has bagged me. Very unfortunate for me just as I was beginning to enjoy myself, and perhaps you will think it unfortunate for you. But please don't think so, for it is really no good. I quite understand that you think that you are still in love with me, and I am afraid that I enjoy your being in love with me.

But all the same, when I think it over I hate the thought of it. So please dismiss it from your mind.

"We spoke about my painting. Some day perhaps I might paint you, but what I would really like to do, and perhaps you could do for me, is to have some sittings from Mr. Onsin. It's not so much that I admire him. Although, as far as actors go, I don't know any one I like better. But what I'm thinking of is that if I could send a portrait of him to the Academy, and there is still time, it might possibly be accepted. He would make a very fine portrait as I would do him. You might perhaps tell him this. You need not tell him that I said so, but just hint something of the kind.

"And what a clever play *What Rot!* really is! It puzzles me completely to think why Mr. Macarthy so constantly ridiculed it; it almost makes me suspect that he was jealous of the author.

"My head is aching too badly for me to write any more, but you might write me if you have time. My nose is running, and I am altogether a horrible sight, or I would ask you to come and see me; but please do not think of doing so on your own until you hear from me that I am better. Apart from my nose, we must not run the risk of your picking up a germ from me. You are a very dear person, and I should not like you to come to harm through your old and affectionate friend—BARBARA."

He stood with the precious thing in his hand while pleasure and chagrin chased each other through his blood.

"Not Miss Nightingale's writing, I think," his hostess drawled; "but of course you won't want to tell me who it is." She drew a long breath with the suggestion of a sniff in it: "Anyhow I've made up my mind to go to Bath."

Adam mechanically expressed a hope that she would be comfortable there, and declining on the

In London

ground of weariness her offer of supper, ascended to his bedroom to bury himself again in his treasure, reading and rereading into it every possible and impossible hope and despair.

Then at last he sat himself down to gush forth a hot reply. His pen flew over the paper, careless of punctuation and spelling, but pulsing with what seemed to him to be the topmost summit of passion. How terrible of her to be ill : how thoughtful to write : how kind to think of him : how cruel to say what she said. How wise she was and how foolish : how generous and harsh and brave and absurdly fearful. How he died for love of her and would not have it otherwise : but (oh ghost of Herrick !) would rather live for her : how he could not live without her for another hour, but would never see her again if she wished it. And so on for some solid pages : the sort of letter every male is ashamed to have written and every female is rejoiced to receive, even when she scornfully, or prudishly, or truly piously burns it at the stake. A letter of maudlin sentimentality, ludicrous in itself, but clean and pleasing to think of as written in that room decorated with the maudlin sensualities collected by its former occupant, Mr. Bouchier-Bellingham.

Fast as his pen winged its way, the small hours saw him put it at last in its envelope. Then he stopped to think that though he brought it to Spring Street now, the letter could not in course of post reach Chelsea until the afternoon. And he swore she must have it for her breakfast, dreaming that she might look vainly for it on waking. . . . Happy thought, to walk down to Chelsea then and here and leave it himself at her flat. . . . It looked a long walk on the map, an hour at least, but despite his alleged weariness, not purely fanciful, he felt he could not sleep, and the walk would do him good ; ease his nerves, brace him, make the to-morrow without her less unbearable.

Out of the house he stole and out of the square, and by familiarly named Clarendon Street to the Bayswater Road. The first Park gates he came to were closed ; so, knowing no shorter way, he had to go east past the ground where Mr. Macarthy had told him that Yorick lay buried, as far as Marble Arch, before turning south towards Chelsea. A long round, but the night made it delicious ; for the rain had stopped, the temperature was rising, and the earth smelt of spring : in the heart of the darkness he was conscious of life burgeoning secretly around him as of his own flowering within. Earthward the gloom was intense, but as he approached Piccadilly the sky above the trees recalled to him a child's book picture of the Northern Lights. Victorious Peace drove her chariot over Hyde Park Corner on a roadway of white flame towards the stars : east of her whirled the fantastic windmills, and to the west the Titan's scissors shore through the clouds. He thought now of a painting in the Dublin gallery of the opening of the sixth seal, and from that of how, at any moment, whole squadrons of Deaths on pale horses of aluminium might ride down the firmament and blast Victorious Peace, chariot, champing team and all into one ruin with the hospital below.

The warm air reeked with antiseptics as he turned past the hospital into Belgrave Square. . . . A few minutes later he was standing by a letter-box : the letter-box he had seen spattered with his grandmother's brains. Then he passed on into Cliveden Place, across Sloane Square (where a Clongowes boy was managing the Court Theatre) and into the King's Road : the interminable King's Road. By this time he was weary beyond question, and Joy Mansions seemed farther off than ever ; but, as day was breaking, he found them. An incredibly early milkman had already penetrated the premises ; so he was able to reach the hall, and found with the

In London

aid of an electric torch the information that the studio his lady love occupied was on the top floor.

He panted up the concrete staircase, and found a light shining under her door, and heard her move within. He wished he had the courage to knock . . . but he had not ; and there being no letter-box, he thrust his missive under the door and, turning, fled.

Chapter Thirty-Five

SURRENDER

THOUGH panic drove Adam down the steps of Joy Mansions, at the street level the glass of exhilaration rose again : so that he seemed to himself, with the morning breeze flung on his face, Antony risen from the arms of Cleopatra. After all, despite the anti-climax, he had been nearer Barbara's arms and in a sense more intimate with her than ever before ; he had heard in glamour the very sighing of her couch springs as she drew breath on it, had heard her cough musically as an actress dying sentimentally in a play ; more than that, his eyes had caught the beams of that light which played upon her within. He was untroubled by the reflection that, if Barbara had been conscious of his presence at all, she must have mistaken him for the milkman.

It was now fully dawn, and he thought to himself he might find a shorter way home than the route by which he had come ; so he struck boldly north, and found himself in a region of great buildings strangely alight and buzzing for that hour of the morning : they proved to be that nest of hospitals in the Fulham Road. Into the box for those stricken by cancer he put half of the money in his pocket, fancying that to these sufferers little indeed was love and still less war. Cancer to him was still a child's bogey, comparable with leprosy and hydrophobia and the yet worse plagues lending colour to the possibility of demons triumphing over man : horrors that made even mutual slaughter a human pleasantry and mere extravagance of horseplay.

In London

Heart sickened again with the oppression of these evils mocking his charity, he wandered towards other lights : a building decorated in the fashion of a stove : South Kensington Station. The first train for Praed Street was almost due. He descended to the Inner Circle platforms, where daylight had not yet pushed a visible skirmishing line, and found soldiers : privates of mixed units returning to the Front : men by his reckoning elderly, frozen in despair.

" My God, I'd give my . . . to be in hospital ! " said one. Adam could not catch, but guessed at the missing word. The faces of the others echoed the unholy sentiment. One spat on the line as if he were of a mind to lay his head beside his sputum in front of the incoming train.

A trench helmet rattled down the steps from the booking-office, followed by a young Canadian singing drunkenly to a popular sentimental air some senseless filth. As Adam's train went out the elder men, roused to an odd competition in fatherliness, were helping the youngster to collect his belongings, and he was cursing them for clumsy cripples.

Twenty minutes later Norfolk Square looked refreshingly sane in the daylight. Its respectable Victorianism touched Adam's very heart. Intoxicated with sleep and romance and something indefinable, he turned all the pictures visible from his pillow with their faces to the wall ere he went to bed.

Yet he woke again at eight without the aid of Tomasso, who had gone off, it seemed, to fill some hazardous but remunerative job of national importance, such as spying on his fellow-countrymen. There was a letter that morning from Major Macfadden Smith, and Adam found himself definitely confirmed as tenant of the chambers in Plowden Buildings, at his own figure for the duration of the war. This strengthened his tone in answering Miss

280

Durward's query whether he had left the house in the small hours: "I suppose you went to post a *billet-doux* to your lady love?" she suggested.

"Not exactly," said he.

Less cautiously she commented: "You were long enough to post a good many."

"Was I?" said he.

Whereupon she made a peevish movement, upset a tea-cup over the clean table-cloth and lost her temper: "I won't have such goings on in this house. For all I know you may have gone out to..."

Adam saw red: "Don't confuse me with Mr. Bouchier-Bellingham," he cried.

"You're far worse than him," she answered, loosing the cat's bag; "he never made any secrets, but you're a young hypocrite . . . and a coward too. . . . Why aren't you, like him, at the Front, trying to do something to keep the Huns from murdering decent people over here? All you're fit for is to mess about with women who don't know their own minds." As Adam preserved a provocative calm, she exploded once again: "Even Macarthy was not as bad as that at your age. He had some sense of. . . ." Tears overcame her before she could indicate the nature of the sense she held Mr. Macarthy to possess.

Adam would have liked to comfort her, but instinct warned him to be careful. He was slinking out of the room, fancying himself covered from observation by the handkerchief masking her eyes, when she dropped a detaining hand on his arm so suddenly that he nearly fell upon her. "Excuse me for behaving like this," she babbled, "it's all these Huns . . . and Tomasso . . . and I do feel responsible to Mr. Macarthy if . . . but you won't be troubled with me for long;" here she sobbed hysterically and at last made an end. "Kiss me as if I was your mother, and we'll say no more about it."

In London

Adam stood a moment holding her hand and even finding it in his heart to pat it. "I can't kiss you as if you were my mother," he apologised, "because I am fonder of you than I was of her, and I respect you more than I did her;" so saying, he kissed her hand and left the room. He had scored unwittingly his first triumph with a woman.

His guardian angel could not have excelled Miss Durward in virtuous friendliness for his remaining days in her house. She even went down to Plowden Buildings to see him comfortably settled in, and impressed the charwoman with the sinfulness of wronging in thought or deed so beautiful a young gentleman. Her valediction was: "Up in this eyrie you'll be like a bird without a mate. I don't know what'll become of you." But she spoke with irreproachable detachment; for within the coarse folds of her spiritual garment lay wounded, but not dead, the emotions of frustrate maternity.

But if Miss Durward was kind and kinder than of old, not so Barbara. His precious letter was left unanswered for three weeks and a day; and only the distraction of entertaining the less unbearable members of the Grand company on Sundays, the one day he was not busy at the theatre or the garage, kept him from despair. The floor round his bed was littered with the sentimental poetry books presented to Major Macfadden Smith by his brother, and the learned heroes of the Devil's Own Volunteers had their nights made hideous by his passionate voice flinging his grandfather's romantics from the roof of Plowden Buildings into the void.

Then, when he had with the vigour of youth expelled Barbara from the innermost circle of his system, and was becoming conscious of the charms of Mrs. Onsin's new understudy, Cynthia Churchill, a younger sister of Drusilla Dartmouth, Barbara suddenly reappeared. There she was, one Monday morning, sitting in Mr. Duval's Overland, and

nodding to Adam as easily as if he were just nobody, good or bad.

"I hope you're all right again?" he murmured, with tender banality.

"Quite," she said blankly, and obeyed, not very successfully, Mr. Duval's direction to reverse out of the yard.

By this time Adam was the better driver, despite sundry awkward lapses contrived by his artistic temperament. In difficulties he was admirable, but out of them less successful; and on clear roads, presenting no hazards, his pace might be eight or eight and twenty miles an hour without his appearing conscious of the difference.

"All mighty fine for a private owner," swore Mr. Duval, "but for God's sake never take up a real job."

"Don't you think I could drive an ambulance?" Adam asked modestly.

"'Eaven 'elp the poor blighters," Mr. Duval answered him.

Adam was annoyed with Mr. Duval for criticising him in the presence of Barbara; and that Monday Mr. Duval had a pair of naughty pupils, Barbara being markedly cantankerous. But Mr. Duval was patient with her, saying only at the end of the lesson: "'Flu is an awful disease, madam; I know 'ow you're feeling. Like recovering from a sick drunk."

Adam was indignant, but Barbara laughed: "Something like that," she said.

To Mr. Duval Barbara could be gracious, but the face she turned to her suitor was adamant when he pleaded: "Why didn't you answer my letter?"

"Why didn't you answer mine?" she retorted.

Adam stared at her, for a moment glimpsing hope. "You wrote an answer to the letter I left at your studio?"

In London

"I did not," she riposted; "it called for no answer, since it was not an answer to mine."

"But it was!" cried Adam, "I sat up all night writing it, and then carried it down all the way to Chelsea myself, that you might have it first thing in the morning. Surely it was a love-letter if ever there was one?"

"I did not ask you to write me a love-letter," she said icily; "I asked you to give me an introduction to Oswald Onsin. Why didn't you do that instead of writing me nonsense?"

Then rage seized on Adam's heart, so that he had a mind to beat her. But he merely lifted his hat with elaborate courtesy, turned on his heel and walked out of the garage yard, with the intention never to re-enter it.

Weeks flowed into months, spring begot summer and was put away with the past. The Western Front buckled and gave: visibly it crumbled away, but the ocean was alive with ship-loads of fresh buttresses; and in the East the sun was breaking through the clouds.

Adam read a column or two of war news in *The Times* every morning, but it all seemed to him of trivial importance; for Cynthia Churchill came to tea with him again and again. She was sweetly pretty, prettier than Barbara, if less distinguished: prettier than her sister, Drusilla Dartmouth, better educated and at once less silly, and less canny: in short, a companionable and charming little lady, appealing to the senses and not devastating to the mind. Only Adam's shyness stood between him and the promise of great happiness.

One Sunday afternoon in June they sat for hours on the roof, and reached the point of being all but engaged; for she had more than signified her willingness to marry him, and he had all but asked her. Summoning his grandfather's ghostly aid, he had read her one of Sir David's sonnets called

Surrender, and his guest buried her face in her hands as she listened :—

“ You wonder why you yielded. Reason veiled
By treacherous unreason bubbled your blood
To weak surrender. Had you but withstood
His forlorn hope, then his assault had failed.
Had you but kept your colour and not paled
When his trump blew Retreat. Had he not
seen

Your white flag flying where defeat had been,
Your virgin citadel were yet unscaled.

Is your war over or but just begun ?

Can you retrench the breach 'gainst storm
again ?

Where lodgment once has been defence is vain,
Unless the conqueror weary of what's won . . .

Forth with your keys and open fling the gate,
To greet his trumpeter whose name is Fate.”

As Adam's voice dropped Cynthia dropped her hands ; and she was lying back in her chair, her violet eyes all misty, her red lips slightly parted, and in these febrile days who shall say but she and Adam might almost have fallen a-kissing, when a bald-headed gentleman bobbed half his person out of a window and hailed Adam with the information that for ten minutes past some one had been summoning his door.

While Miss Churchill straightened herself upon her chair Adam descended amidst a volley of knocks, punctuated by peels at the bell, to find Barbara on the mat. Then came a blurred quarter of an hour ; and Cynthia was gone and Barbara reclining in her chair with her grandfather's poems in her lap.

Chapter Thirty-Six

LONDON'S LAST AIR-RAID

"AND may I ask," said Barbara, "why you were so long answering the door?"

Adam answered simply, but already as one on his defence: "Miss Churchill and I were out here. . . . I didn't expect any callers. We didn't hear any one until a neighbour told me there was some one at the door. . . . I'm awfully sorry."

"So am I," quoth Barbara, "for I never thought I should be kept waiting by you because of another woman. You're very fickle, Adam."

"I am not fickle," Adam declared, "but I'm not altogether a fool."

"Far from it," Barbara agreed, "I admire your taste. She's quite pretty and not bad style for an actress." She threw a glance behind her. "Where did you say you were when I knocked?"

"Out here," declared Adam, reddening. "How do you know she was an actress?"

Barbara glanced at him contemptuously. "Do you know any woman over here who isn't an actress?"

"Of course I do," he snapped at her, and then wished he had been less emphatic; for she did not let the statement pass unchallenged, but asked whom he knew that was not an actress.

"Miss Durward is not an actress," he strove by a lofty tone to prove his case.

But Barbara was too much for him. "Your landlady," she admitted, "is not an actress, and I suppose in a sense you know her. Any one else?"

London's Last Air-Raid

"The Countess of Derrydown," he said impressively.

But Barbara was not impressed. "Lady Derrydown used to be in the front row at the Gaiety. . . . Any one else?" she queried.

Adam was forced to play his trump card: "Miss Jane Nightingale."

Barbara clapped her hands. "You've won. Old Jane Nightingale really is respectable. Tell me about her. I suppose Stephen gave you an introduction to her. She was an old flame of his; . . . perhaps the only one that really burnt. . . . Though my mother pretends he was very fond of her." She threw herself back in her chair. "I simply can't stand my mother sometimes. . . . Tell me about Miss Nightingale. She doesn't look so very old, they say. Too placid to wear out. Are you in love with her too?"

"Not in the sense that I am with you," said Adam.

Barbara laughed gleefully. "So you are in love with me still? Well you can be now if you like. But there must be no one else: neither Miss Nightingale nor the little actress, nor any one else."

Adam was moved within, but presented an external stolidity, for he was determined not to be played with. "Did you come here to tell me that?" he asked.

Barbara laughed in his face. "What do you take me for? A sloppy schoolgirl? . . . I came here to have a look at the Law Courts, if you want to know. . . ."

"I don't want to know," said Adam resentfully, though he tried to sound polite.

Barbara shrugged her shoulders. "Anyhow that's why I came, and then I remembered that you told me you lived here, and thought you might be interested to see me." Smiling in his sulky face, she went on: "I thought I might even be able to persuade you to give me tea."

In London

Adam made a shamefaced movement. "I beg your pardon," said he. "I'll have a kettle on in a moment," and passing through the bedroom to the kitchen, he not only put the kettle on the gas-stove, but cooled himself by letting the cold water tap run on his head. He returned to her affably bearing some fresh tea things.

Said Barbara: "I see Miss Churchill has eaten all the cake."

"She didn't, I ate it," said Adam chivalrously.

But Barbara went on laughing at him: "Don't be quixotic. Well I remember you never ate anything but bread and butter. And why shouldn't a woman eat cake if she's prepared to pay the price? All that old-fashioned sentiment is as dead as Pharaoh and Queen Victoria. Women nowadays mean to have what they want."

"Did you have what you wanted when you married Leaper-Carahar?" Adam asked less urbanely.

"No," she answered point blank, "but I wasn't a woman then. I know better now. And when I found he was not what I wanted I didn't stick him long." Her strongly beautiful eyes flashed as she added, in a tone to make some men tremble: "Nor do I mean to stick any one long who isn't what I want."

Adam's glance fell before her. "Anyhow," he said meekly, "there's plenty more cake."

After that their talk was less stormy, and Barbara condescended to say that he knew how to make tea, and that she was glad she had come. She had been there about an hour when she bade him show her his premises, and under his blushing conduct she inspected every inch with an air of detached and patronising interest. "Not bad," said she when the tour was finished, and she led the way back to the roof. "I like it best out here." She swept her eyes towards the river: "What a jolly view you must get of air-raids!"

London's Last Air-Raid

Adam confessed that he had not been there long enough to say whether it afforded an entertaining prospect of air-raids or not. He told her of the raid which had impressed him most, and of his vision of Miss Nightingale and the ambulance in Broad Sanctuary.

"I suppose it was that made you take up motor-ing," Barbara suggested. "How sentimental you are. . . . And is Woodbine Blake another of your flames? You really are a little Don Juan."

Now Adam knew himself perfectly well to be nothing of the kind, but he could not resist a self-conscious smile at this delicious blame. Nevertheless he said modestly that he feared he was nothing of the kind.

Barbara eyed him critically: "Perhaps not. But you will be later on. . . . It's in your blood, you know, just as it is in mine."

His eye caught hers, but had not the courage to hold it. He took the book of verses off the table where it now lay. "You're thinking of our grandfather?"

Barbara nodded. "Yes. I know he was yours too. The Marchesa made that quite clear to me. What a life that woman had!"

Said Adam: "And what a death!"

Barbara shrugged her shoulders: "Dramatic and soon done with. . . . It might have been worse."

Adam shivered: "If you'd heard her groan as they carried her in." There was less bravado in Barbara's tone as she rejoined: "I forgot that you were there. . . . But anyhow, things horrible for onlookers are often nothing to the people who seem to suffer. . . . Reflex action and that sort of thing. Stephen Macarthy always says that grandfather probably enjoyed being killed. I shouldn't mind it myself in a fair fight. . . . I wish English women could be soldiers like in Russia."

In London

"There have been English women soldiers, but they passed for men."

Barbara took the new turning: "Do you really think that a woman could pass for a man for long among other men?"

Adam shifted uneasily: "It's a difficult question," he murmured; "I don't know enough about it."

Barbara looked at him very hard: "Tell me honestly, how much do you know about women?"

Adam confronted her just long enough to say: "I don't know how much I know, that's the truth." Dropping his eyes, he added: "If what the Marchesa told me is true, I know just a little more than you do about men."

Promptly she demanded: "What did the Marchesa tell you about me?"

Adam walked to and fro uneasily. "Only about hiding in your bedroom. . . . I don't remember exactly what she said," He looked to his wrist-watch for suggestion: "Look here, it's seven o'clock, you'd better let me give you dinner somewhere."

"It's easier to talk here," said Barbara.

"But you can't eat here," said Adam; "you can't dine on cake, and I've nothing else. Do come out and have a meal with me for once. You've never done that all the years I've known you."

Barbara rose, laughing: "I see you want to get rid of me."

"Don't mock me," said Adam. "Why should I want to get rid of you?"

Provokingly she answered: "You're afraid to face Miss Churchill to-morrow."

Although Adam had not thought of this, he was silenced by the truth of it; but putting on his best face, he rejoined: "Much you know about it. Anyhow, come along."

As always to Adam on Sundays, Fleet Street was dream-like when he and Barbara passed down

London's Last Air-Raid

it in search of food. He still knew little of the customs of the City, and was surprised to find the neighbouring restaurant, where he had meant to bring her, closed. This ought to have warned him to turn west instead of east; but, absent-mindedly, he led her on until she called a halt at an unpretentious entrance near Bouverie Street. "This looks Italian," she said; "let us pretend we are in Italy."

They found themselves almost alone with an elderly waiter, whom they bewildered by addressing in the choicest Tuscan acquired in the Italian circle at the Muses Club. They refreshed themselves exotically on vermicelli soup and macaroni cheese washed down with Chianti. Both were very thirsty, and the draughts of Chianti were out of all proportion to the rations of macaroni cheese: that generous wine inspired them to oblivion of each other's shortcomings, and Adam was hoping that they might part that night on a basis of firm and promising friendship, not necessarily troubling to Miss Churchill, when there fell upon their ears One and Two and Three and Four strokes of warning of the uncertainty of fate, and the elderly waiter all but let fall a Neapolitan ice as he indulged himself in an expletive in his native tongue.

As Adam looked at Barbara he almost fancied that he heard the wings of doom: he seemed to hear the street outside wax noisy and fall more than ever silent. Time flew while Barbara daintily helped herself to the ice.

"You heard the warning? It's an air-raid," Adam said.

"What of that?" said Barbara. The elderly waiter hastened with the bill, and gesticulated the need for despatch that he might close the door and hide beneath the Chianti. Barbara looked to Adam: "Can't I have coffee?" she asked.

Adam read in the waiter's face an incapacity to distinguish between coffee and asparagus. He paid

In London

the bill. "I'm afraid it's no use trying to get coffee here," he said.

Barbara pursed her lips. "I noticed a coffee mill in your kitchen," she said.

Adam looked at her imploringly. "I dare not ask you there," he said, "it's dangerous."

"In what way?" she demanded coldly.

"I mean," said Adam, "it's considered very dangerous in air-raids. An old building, not fireproof."

Barbara rose and shook herself. "If you think I care sixpence whether it's dangerous or not, I may as well go home," she said.

"All the way to Chelsea?" Adam asked anxiously.

"No, to St. John's Wood," she answered; "I moved yesterday."

"If you're near a station, that would be safer," said Adam; "you could go almost all the way by tube from Aldwych."

"Bring me to Aldwych," she said sharply.

As they reached the street the guns were audible from down the river, and as Adam and Barbara walked up Fleet Street, up came the roar of the guns after them, faster and faster, until Barbara made him turn to watch the shrapnel all red-gold above the City in the evening gloom. "This is gorgeous," she cried, "I'm not going to bury myself in the earth with lovely things like that to see." She looked at him: "Is your flat too dangerous for you? The outside, I mean, not the inside."

Chianti, fresh air and shrapnel betrayed Adam into the answer: "Come and see."

It seemed to him the very next moment they were on the roof of Plowden Buildings and the world on fire all round them. He was drunk and in possession of only three notions; and not sure what these notions were, but all revolved round Barbara. In the height of the tumult she flung an impulsive hand to him: "What if a bomb struck us now!" she cried.

London's Last Air-Raid

"It would be well," said he, but he did not touch her hand, for the clearest of his notions was that she and Cynthia Churchill had both been his guests that day, and he must betray neither the one nor the other. Besides, at heart he was still afraid of Barbara, still distrustful of her phantasy. From this instant they both sobered and fell into dullness as the firing died away. They had been sitting in silence a very long time when Barbara shivered and yawned. "The best of things come to an end," she said; "how can I get home?"

Adam looked at his watch: "You can't unless you walk," he answered, "it's one o'clock."

She started up and then sat down again laughing. "May I have a rug," she asked, "and sleep in this chair?"

Adam hesitated before saying: "Would you mind my bed?"

And she hesitated before replying: "What would you do?"

"There's a big Chesterfield in the sitting-room."

"Why shouldn't I have that?" asked Barbara.

Adam answered cheerfully: "I'll spare you details, but you'd be more comfortable in my bedroom."

Barbara laughed outright: "Little tyrant!" said she.

So Adam had his way, and Barbara prepared to go to bed in the room sacred to the meeting of Jane Nightingale and Major Macfadden Smith.

"Leave me grandfather's poems to read," she said, "and tell me, what morning paper do you get?"

"On Sunday," said Adam, "the *Observer*. Do you wish to see it?"

She shook her head. "I mean on week-days."

"The *Times* and the *Daily News*," said Adam.

"Good," said Barbara, "have you Saturday's *Times*?"

In London

He told her that if the charwoman or the mice had not eaten it, it should be somewhere about in the sitting-room, and as she was undressing he brought it to her.

"Wait a moment," she called, and then opening the door to admit him displayed herself in his pyjamas. He was tempted to kiss the hand that took the paper from him and the feet white and naked beneath the trouser legs, but soberly he bade her good-night. Yet not entirely without a twinge did he hear her lock the door as he descended to the sitting-room. He stood there a long while in darkness looking out of the window, trying to recall his conversation with Cynthia Churchill, trying not to think of Barbara. The effort at self-mastery wore him out at last, and he sidled into a chair and dozed.

He was wakened by a sharp concussion and started up thinking the raid had begun again ; but there was no sound, so he sat down once more and was dropping off when there was another bang, this time quite clearly on the floor above. His thought was that some part of the ancient building was falling in as the result of the cannonade, and that perhaps even as he stood there Barbara might be struck and slain. In an instant he was up the staircase, determined if necessary to force the door.

It yielded without force. One light was still on in the room, and showed Barbara calmly asleep, still wearing his pyjamas. Beside the bed on the floor lay *The Times* and beside *The Times* Sir David Byron-Quinn's poems. He told himself that he had heard them falling on the floor, and did not stop to wonder how they had come to fall upon it twice. He only thought that he must make sure there had been no accident, that she had not been hurt. He stole across the room on tip-toe and assured himself that her sleep was normal, that she was breathing regularly, that not so much as a speck of plaster had fallen

London's Last Air-Raid

from the ceiling. . . . It was queer to see her in his pyjamas ; if he wore them like that he thought he would catch cold : he looked away from her to her clothes piled on a chair, and from them to the book of poems on the floor. He lifted and found it open at the sonnet he had read to Cynthia that afternoon. He closed the book convulsively and gazed long upon Barbara. He turned to go ; . . . he turned back and looked at her again. . . . He told himself she was his guest : he must not presume on anything she had said or seemed to say, done or seemed to do : he must not run the tiniest risk of hurting or offending her : he must make her feel as safely at home with him as if he were her brother or their old and common friend, Mr. Macarthy himself. He was turning to go when Barbara opened her eyes and looked up at him : " You sweet person," said she.

Adam shrank back : " I beg your pardon. . . . I thought you were asleep ; . . . something fell," he stuttered.

" Did something fall ? " asked Barbara sleepily, and as, not catching the question, he made a movement as though really to depart, she spoke again.

" Don't go away," she murmured, closing her eyes ; and, as he hesitated, continued in the same low voice : " you can sit beside the bed if you like."

" But will you be able to sleep ? " he asked, still with an air of apology for his intrusion.

In her turn she asked : " Why not ? "

This seemed a simple question ; but he failed to find the answer. And after ten minutes' vain search, while she lay silent, motionless and so calmly lovely that he fancied her the Sleeping Beauty that might never wake, her lips parted just enough to say in a voice so drowsy that he caught slowly the words, and more slowly still their meaning : " What is it that man Duval is always saying we must do when we turn a corner ? "

Chapter Thirty-Seven

AND SO THEY WERE MARRIED

THOUGH it was only five o'clock summer time, the hottest sun of June that year was already beating on the roof of Plowden Buildings. Adam rose and looked at himself in the glass. . . . Could it be really he? . . . Everything was incredible. His glass gave him no reason for its not being a dream. But anyhow, dream or no dream, his chief thought was that Barbara must be gone before the charwoman came; . . . unless indeed she elected to stay for ever, and he doubted her willingness to do that.

She was still placidly asleep, as placidly as she seemed when he had so innocently come upstairs last night: as placidly as if nothing at all had happened. She did not look so beautiful as he had always dreamed she would look in her sleep: not so beautiful as she had looked last night! Still she had a beauty not to be despised. And at that moment he was ready to endow her with a thousand charms of which bodily perfection was the least. This morning he told himself fervently that he would never allow himself to think of her mere physical attraction again. It was not right so to think of a woman one truly loved. He must put such unworthiness away. A flood of exaltation flung him on his knees by her bedside, and he would have poured forth thanksgiving had not his eyes fallen on *The Times* lying where she had thrown it. They focussed themselves on a cross-heading: "Irish Official's Divorce Case."

Still on his knees, his left hand unconsciously

And so They Were Married

upon her feet, his right holding the paper, he read :—

“LEAPER-CARAHAR v. LEAPER-CARAHAR AND MACARTHY. (Before Mr. Justice Doncaster and a Common Jury.)

“In this case Mr. Leaper-Carahar, C.B., a well-known official of the Irish Government, obtained a decree nisi against his wife, Barbara Leaper-Carahar, whose maiden name was Burns, on the ground of her adultery with Stephen Macarthy. Damages were claimed, but on the advice of his Lordship, after examining the petitioner, the claim was withdrawn. There was no defence.

“Mr. Bolsover, for the petitioner, said that the parties were married as recently as the beginning of the previous year, when the grounds for the present case arose. There were no children. Petitioner was aware of an earlier intimacy between his wife and the co-respondent, whom counsel described as a gentleman of liberal means with worse than liberal views. On account of the notoriously coarse moral fibre of the co-respondent, petitioner had insisted that this intimacy should cease ; but within a year of marriage respondent had locked him out of her bedroom, and on finding that in her absence the key had been removed, left the house and refused to return. Evidence was given that she had gone directly to co-respondent's chambers and remained there for several days and nights, subsequently proceeding to London, where she was now domiciled, presumably, as she had no private means, under the protection of co-respondent.

“Mr. Justice Doncaster pronounced a decree nisi with costs.”

Adam leaped convulsively to his feet, the paper clutched in his hand. There seemed no sense in anything : his brain appeared to open and shut.

In London

Was it he who was standing up or he who was lying in his bed looking at him? Who was it that was lying in his bed looking at him? He was just in time to see Barbara's smile transformed from the gracious to the cynical. She was the first to speak. "If that is how you feel, the sooner I go home the better."

"I agree," said he.

Her eyes shot through him. "Please leave the room," she commanded, and with a gesture rather of despair than rage he obeyed.

It was queer to hear the key turn again in the lock as he descended, and queerer still to hear her methodically turning on the geyser for her hot bath. Queerest of all, that he took pleasure in the thought that as it was Monday morning she would find an unused bath towel on the rail: he would have been ashamed for her to find a dirty towel there.

Already cooling from the first torrent of rage, he set himself to make her some tea, creeping upstairs and about the kitchen on tiptoe lest he should disturb her.

But Barbara would have no more of his hospitality. She flung one short tirade in his face: "Because when I come to see you I allowed things to happen like this, I suppose you think the same happens everywhere. . . . You forget that Stephen Macarthy is a gentleman, and gentlemen do not take advantage of an act of folly." So saying, she was gone, with a bang of the door which wakened Adam's bald-headed neighbour, and confirmed him in his opinion that she was an obstreperous baggage.

Adam prowled upstairs and down, his hands over his ears to shut out the sound of her departing footsteps. She must have passed the Temple gates before he dropped them, hating himself for allowing her to go thus and expose herself to insolent inquiry. But what could he have done? Barbara had never

298

And so They Were Married

listened to reason from him : it was certain now that she never would. He had rendered himself utterly ridiculous by reading that wretched report otherwise than between the lines. What irony was it that had made him for ever jealous of the man he loved and respected more than any one in the world. If only Mr. Macarthy had told him what Barbara was doing. . . . If only she had told him what she had done ! An accursed trinity of emotions chased him up and down stairs, chased him out on the roof, to hang over the parapet asking himself why after all he was alive. . . . If only that bomb had fallen last night. . . . Then he remembered where bombs were falling in plenty, and grew calm and quiet.

His charwoman found him already dressed and hungry for breakfast, the materials of which she brought with her. He thought she looked at him queerly as he went into his bedroom presently to get his hat and gloves. In order to say something he mentioned that he might be giving up the rooms before long.

"Dear me, sir," said she, "I will be sorry. . . . But of course things do 'appen, don't they ?" she sighed. "It's the war, I suppose."

By ten o'clock he was in Waterloo Place, but he did not turn to the right towards the theatre : he kept straight along Pall Mall, past the Athenæum Club, past the Traveller's, the Reform, the Carlton and the Automobile. Then he entered a building that displayed the Red Cross. "About driving an ambulance," he said to some one who met him with an air of interrogation : he did not notice whether he spoke to male or female.

Presently he was in a lift, then in a waiting-room, then talking to a compatriot of his own, a comely and business-like lady. "The doctor is here now," she said, "go and see what he says, and then come back to me."

In London

The doctor said sharply: "Why aren't you at the Front already?"

Adam mentioned various reasons, which he pooh-poohed until he heard the name of Macfadden Smith. Then he waggled Adam's arm about, declared he saw nothing the matter with it, made him out a certificate to that effect and presented him with two bottles of lymph. "You ought to be in the trenches," was his farewell.

The business-like Irish lady just glanced at the certificate and said: "When would you like to take your test?"

"As soon as I can," said Adam.

"You can do it now if you like," she said.

"Make it so," said Adam, for the doctor's taunt, following on Barbara's, left him indifferent to everything else but the desire to be done with all he knew.

She scribbled on a piece of paper. "You'll find the ambulance at the bottom of St. James's Street in a quarter of an hour," said she; "this is an introduction to our officer in charge."

Then it seemed to Adam that he was transported direct to the inside of an ambulance, which he shared with a heavy-looking young man with a provincial accent: they were being driven up St. James's Street by a middle-aged woman in some sort of uniform, who seemed chiefly concerned to explain to the Red Cross official beside her that she did not want to drive a motor-car, but to cook: she had never driven before but once, whereas she had been cooking all her life: yet you'd hardly believe it, the C.O. said he'd rather she drove than cooked.

"I'd rather she cooked than drove," growled the heavy young man, and by the corner of Berkeley Street their examiner seemed to have come to the same conclusion; for Adam was called to take his trick at the wheel.

There followed mere nightmare; for Adam was not in a condition to handle even the accustomed

And so They Were Married

Overland, and the ambulance was a Buick and had to be driven from the near side. He got her turned into Berkeley Street without catastrophe and as far as the corner of Hay Hill. But then his troubles began, for at the stiffest piece of gradient the examiner bade him stop dead and then start up again. Now Adam knew perfectly the nature of this test and exactly the right thing to do; but for the life of him he could not do it, and the ambulance would have charged backwards and wedged itself between Devonshire and Lansdowne House but for the examiner's controlling brake. Adam expected to be turned down there and then, but the fates decreed otherwise. "Carry on," said the official, not unkindly.

Encouraged by his tone, Adam carried on and without disaster tooled the Buick to the left into Dover Street, right into Grafton Street, right down Albemarle Street, left into Piccadilly, right down Regent Street, left into Orange Street, right into the Haymarket (a little flustered from the bottle-neck), left into Suffolk Place and Trafalgar Square, right round the square and back into Pall Mall. All was going smoothly now, and Adam saw himself rolling back to their starting-point with reasonable hope, when he was bidden "take the bottle-neck into St. James's Square." He did it successfully, but it strained his nerves. "Through Charles Street back into Regent Street," his amiable tormentor commanded. And then just as he got into Regent Street, passing the Grand stage door, an omnibus swinging up from Waterloo Place all but struck him. His companion's brake averted collision, but Adam, re-engaging his engine with insufficient acceleration, it stopped dead. Even now the examiner was not altogether discouraging. "You'll find her easy to start up," he said as Adam leaped out.

But Adam did not find her so. Starting up the

In London

Overland had always been a serious business, and in such a condition of nerves as he found himself now, might have been beyond him. He imagined the compression of the Buick to be stiffer. Lifting the handle in the orthodox way, he turned it twice with an idle flop, heard the official say something about advancing the ignition, and tried again, a third idle flop. He looked round feverishly to see his own portrait grinning at him from the walls of the theatre, to see Cerberus laughing uproariously behind his oniony hand at the stage door, to read a poster of the Self-Help Ministry:—

Help Yourself !
If You Don't,
Who Will ?
Strike Home !

Frantically he seized the starting-handle again and struck home with that downward thrust against which tyros are explicitly cautioned. . . . There was a backfire, and the starting-handle leaped upwards carrying his right arm with it, powerless, but in excruciating pain. . . .

"I say," said the official, this time angrily, "you are a mug ! You'd better leave that engine to me."

Adam left it to him, left it to him completely. . . . He took no interest in it whatever, nor in anything else except a vague wonderment why that official had suddenly been transformed into Cynthia Churchill.

When he next took note of his surroundings he recognised nothing, but Cynthia Churchill was there to explain to him that the ambulance he had proved himself unfit to drive had been used to convey him to the Onsins' house in Kensington, where she, having had some experience as a nurse, had been deputed by their hostess to look after him.

The Onsins had their faults, but as hosts they

And so They Were Married

were irreproachable. Never had Adam been so pampered as during the following weeks. Never had he been so cherished by any woman as by gentle Cynthia Churchill. And she was tactful too, hinting no word that could trouble him on any subject, though puzzled to dismay at his annoyance when the papers appeared once again with his portrait and starred the information that he was a brilliant young Irish actor, who had met with a desperate accident while driving an ambulance in the most dangerous part of the London traffic. Some, though not all the papers, added the portrait of Miss Churchill herself, explaining that she was the beautiful young Scots actress who had momentarily relinquished her duties of understudying that world-famous comedienne, Miss Belinda Bellingham (Mrs. Oswald Onsin) in order to devote herself to nursing the brilliant young Irish actor as aforesaid at Mr. Oswald Onsin's wonderful house overlooking Kensington Palace.

And some again gave portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Oswald Onsin in whose wonderful house, etc., that brilliant young Irish actor, and so on.

Adam wondered if Barbara could fail to see all those portraits and read all those paragraphs. If she did, she gave no sign, and he concluded that once for all she was done with him.

It was quite a month after the accident, and Mrs. Onsin in her robust way was bantering him at dinner as to whether he and Miss Churchill proposed to go on for ever living in sin, when a letter was handed Adam bearing the St. John's Wood postmark. It simply ran in Barbara's least legible writing: "How could you have been so unutterably callous?" . . . Whether the word was "callous" or "careless" he could not quite make out, not being certain to what she referred. But there could be no mistake about the second line: "You had better come and see me at once."

Chapter Thirty-Eight

AND LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER ?

A PREMATURELY spring-like January day burst on the Marylebone Road, along which Adam had trudged to meet Mr. Macarthy on such another morning three years before. Hardly dare one say that London was at peace ; but the thunder of the guns had died down at last on the Western Front ; a quire of the mouths that rolled it lay silent in St. James's Park ; and optimists declared that the last saga of brute heroism had been sung. Pessimists, notably those who had brought about the war, sermonised on the text that the world was now worse off than ever, and nothing could save her from herself but wars more awful still. Profiteers of all classes and kinds, colours and creeds, soldiers and civilians, echoed the sentiment, having now a vested interest in the international slaughterhouse.

So much for the great world of Lord Bulwark and his peers. In Adam's humbler sphere the notable event was that Mr. Leaper-Carahar's decree had been made absolute, and that very morning Barbara was forging for herself fresh bonds.

No less beautiful, though perhaps less sylph-like, than of yore, Barbara came out of the Marylebone Registrar's office, and was handed by Adam into a taxi which stood waiting with a trifle of his luggage, and rather more than a trifle of hers, upon the roof. With Adam beside her the bride whirled off towards Paddington, past a spot new poster showing a gentleman in a nightdress chasing a lady in pyjamas,

And Lived Happily Ever After?

and challenging all comers to say: "Who Can Stop It?"

From the porch of the office the eyes of Mr. Macarthy and Miss Nightingale followed the taxi: hers were humid with emotion, his more than ever sphinx-like.

For a moment Mr. Macarthy paused after the taxi had turned to dust. Then he looked up at the unpromising façade of Madame Tussaud's. "I wonder," said he, "how many persons who once figured at this office are figuring now in the most popular gallery across the road."

"Stephen," cried Miss Nightingale, with tender remonstrance: "how can you be cynical at such a moment?"

"I am no more cynical at such a moment than was Paul," said he.

Her voice was low, but intense, as she rejoined: "Even Paul said it was better to marry than to burn."

Mr. Macarthy gently shook his head. "Do you think he said so to the pious Thecla?"

"Who was she?" Miss Nightingale asked, with bewilderment in her exquisite blue eyes, which deepened as Mr. Macarthy bade her quote no more gospels until she had read them all.

"But I have," she answered, "at least I think so."

Very politely he replied: "I think not. Only those that Rizzio's son selected for your perusal."

"What do you mean," she asked, as one hopeless of understanding.

He declared: "You know quite well," and upset her still further by adding: "Who shall say that the West is wiser than the East?"

She laughed nervously. "Really, Stephen, sometimes I think you're quite mad."

"I was mad once," he replied, "and the blame lies at your door."

In London

"Oh, nonsense," she cried, with eyes turned joyful, "you never really cared."

Whatever his thought, Mr. Macarthy's tone was stern: "It was the madness of my love for you that drove me to write *What Rot!*"

Her face fell, horrified. "Stephen! . . . You don't mean to say?"

He nodded lugubriously. "Lucina Lovelace is a projection of yourself as I visualised you when I was drunk."

Her appearance showed that she believed herself to be shocked. "You actually got drunk?"

"Could I have written it if I were sober?" he demanded. Then he kissed her hand and went on: "Do not blush. In the play as I wrote it the hero did not unveil the heroine. Nor was the incident so spiritedly illustrated on the poster over there invented by me. These are flashes of Mr. Onsin's genius; and to render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, I have no doubt they make the success of the play. But the characters, so far as they exist, and the idea, if one may call it so, are mine. Above all I claim the title. That at least is a work of art. . . . Mr. Onsin wished to call it 'Chase me, Algy!' so I added the sub-title, cribbed from Hardy, 'The Pursuit of the Well-Beloved.'"

"Please say no more," begged Miss Nightingale.

"Thank you for that," he said heartily; "this shall be a secret between us that I know you will not confide to Adam. He is too young to understand, and might make my tragedy a precedent for a worse one of his own."

"Stephen," said Miss Nightingale, "you have turned this happy morning into a miserable one by trying to persuade me that I led you to use your beautiful brain in producing such infamy as that play."

"Tut! my dear Jane," said Mr. Macarthy, "be easy in your mind. You like Adam, you know you

And Lived Happily Ever After?

do; so does everybody, as Barbara will presently find out."

"Adam will never do anything wrong," said Miss Nightingale fervently.

"If Adam never does anything wrong," said Mr. Macarthy, "that will be mainly because you induced me to write *What Rot!*" He nodded at her gravely. "It is true, my dear Jane, though you look at me as if I had seven heads. If I had not written *What Rot!* Adam might still be in his Dublin slum, he might be at Maynooth learning to preach the local variety of your religion, he might be an Irish police spy and brothel-keeper, he might be a British captain or a Sinn Fein private. . . . God only knows, he might even be doing something useful."

"He is doing something useful," she insisted; "I feel sure of that, Stephen." And her face flushed with a rare warmth of colour as Mr. Macarthy took out his watch and smiling his sphinx-like smile, said nothing.

Presently he offered her his arm, which, despite a reluctant gesture, she accepted. And walking slowly down Park Lane, they were about that place whence Adam had watched Victorious Peace galloping on search-lights towards the stars, when he said: "You spoke of my beautiful brain just now, my dear Jane, but yours is the most beautiful of all the minds I know. . . . If you had the smallest grasp of reality. . . ." He broke off and dropped her arm: "What really interests me now is the question, What becomes of Adam."

Her face, that had been radiant a moment ago, fell haggard. "Am I so little to you as that?" she queried sharply.

He turned and looked at her with much tenderness. "Littleness and you cannot be mentioned in one breath," he declared, "and surely we hold the common faith that the future is greater than the past?"

GLASGOW: W. COLLINS SONS AND CO. LTD.

Messrs
COLLINS'

Latest Novels



*Messrs COLLINS will always be glad to send
their book lists regularly to readers who will
send name and address.*

THE RED KNIGHT

F. Brett Young

Author of *The Black Diamond*, etc.

Mr Brett Young's novel, *The Black Diamond*, was considered by many critics the finest novel published last spring. *The Red Knight* is a great tribute to his versatility. It is a superb romance and a passionate love story. His hero, Robert Bryden, is an idealist and a natural and unflinching supporter of unpopular causes. The scene of the novel is laid in Trinacria, a Mediterranean land. Massa, the great Communist leader, has set up a Republic, and Robert Bryden, who has always cherished for him a most devoted belief and admiration, runs the blockade set up round Trinacria and puts himself at Massa's service. There, in an atmosphere glowing in the Southern sun and sinister with intrigue, Bryden is forced into a fatal dilemma, either to betray the great leader who has captured his mind or the woman who has conquered his heart. This dilemma admits of no compromise, and Bryden takes the hero's way out. All the many characters in the book are intensely vivid, and even Mr Brett Young has never created a more subtle or finely drawn hero than Robert Bryden.

THE ROMANTIC LADY

Michael Arlen

Mr Arlen's first book, *The London Venture*, caused a certain sensation. The *Daily Chronicle* said, 'Who is Michael Arlen?' In *The London Venture* we have a highly amusing criticism of life in London.' The *Daily Express* said, 'It is his first book, and its cleverness is simply amazing.' And the *Times* said, 'There is undoubtedly a fascination about this book.' There is the same fascination about the four tales which make up *The Romantic Lady*. They are airy, cynical, polished inquiries into the actions and reactions of women's loves, tickling the reader's sense of humour and sense of style from the moment he picks up the book to find 'The Romantic Lady' glancing down at Noel Anson from her box to the last page, where the revolver smoke is veiling from her the husband of Iris Poole. Mr Arlen knows London Society intimately, and writes of it from the inside. He has a remarkable gift for telling a story, and he tells it as a stylist and wit.

MARTIN PIPPIN IN THE APPLE-ORCHARD

Eleanor Farjeon

The rarest thing in modern literature is good fantasy, and Miss Farjeon's *Martin Pippin* will bear comparison with the best in this kind, either modern or classical. She has given us six exquisite fairy tales, and strung them on a delightful story that is full of surprise and sunlight, brilliant wit, and charming invention. The play of *Martin Pippin* and the six dairymaids who keep the six keys of the well-house makes a story that can be read again and again for the sheer joy of its whimsical poetry.

SIDONIE

Pierre Coalfleet

A true story. Stranger, more romantic, more vividly real than fiction. *Sidonie* tells the story of a little peasant girl in Upper Savoy, who sells wild salads to her neighbours in the mountain villages. She lives in many cities, but it is in London that she spends the twenty fullest years of her life. She was loved passionately by a queer medley of lovers, including a young Italian engineer, a British peer, a hotel chef, and an American millionaire. Her many adventures range from sheer farce to scenes of bitter sacrifice and tragedy, and she is ever assisted by an unquenchable faith in her own best instincts and by the romantic memories of her first and only love. Although the author has withheld her real name and faintly disguised her identity, 'Sidonie' will be recognised by many people who met her in the past, when she kept a Boarding House near Russell Square, and were mystified, captivated, and stirred by the strange contrasts of her character. Before retiring to a remote corner of her native mountains, 'Sidonie' could not resist the temptation to tell her story as a very human document and as a gesture of farewell. In accordance with her wishes the author made notes of the episodes, which were told him in French, and they are translated and transcribed in *Sidonie*.

MADE TO MEASURE

Mrs Henry Dudeney

Author of *Candlelight*, etc.

The scene of this popular author's new novel is an old Sussex town, and the people with whom she deals is that new villa population, the male element of which goes every day to work in the city and the female element gossips, scandalises, plays bridge, tennis, and golf, and is utterly 'made to measure' and stereotyped.

Collins' 'First Novel' Library

AUTUMN TITLES

THE BEAUTIFUL YEARS

Henry Williamson

This is the first book of a very promising young writer. It is a subtle and penetrating study of childhood; the story of a wistful little boy, his timid and shrinking dealings with grown-ups, and his friendship for a little girl whom he idealises. The scene is laid in a remote part of the country away from ordinary life and influences, and the author reveals an understanding of children equal to that of Francis Thompson. Mr Williamson has a poet's love of nature, and his descriptions of the changing seasons are curiously vivid and beautiful.

THE GHOST GIRL

Mary Marlowe

Miss Marlowe has much successful literary work to her credit, but this is her first novel. It is a fine 'open-air' story, with Australia for its setting. Miss Marlowe has a fine sense of humour and characterisation, and *The Ghost Girl* is a charmingly real and convincing heroine. The book is full of exciting incident and there are many striking pictures of Australian scenery. The description of a bush fire is one of the finest ever written.

27



**HOME USE
CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT
MAIN LIBRARY**

This book is due on the last date stamped below.
1-month loans may be renewed by calling 642-3405.
6-month loans may be recharged by bringing books
to Circulation Desk.

Renewals and recharges may be made 4 days prior
to due date.

ALL BOOKS ARE SUBJECT TO RECALL 7 DAYS
AFTER DATE CHECKED OUT.

INTERLIBRARY LOAN

MAR 18 1976

UNIV. OF CALIF., BERK.
CL. CIR. APR 29 1976

LD21—A-40m-8,'75
(S7737L)

General Library
University of California
Berkeley

YB 68216

765971

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

